THE
LIFE OF
THE
HOLY
MOTHER
ST. TERESA

1809

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Limerick

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THE

LIFE

Ex Libris

OF THE

HOLY MOTHER ST. TERESA,

Bmundi FOUNDRESS OF THE Walsh

REFORMATION OF THE DISCALCEATE CARMELITES,

ACCORDING TO THE PRIMITIVE RULE;

TOGETHER WITH

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE FOUNDATIONS WHICH SHE MADE.

The whole abridged from her own Writings.

Acts ii. 17. In the last days, saith the Lord, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons, and your daughters shall prophesy; and your young men shall see visions, &c.

St. John xiv. 21. He that loveth me shall be loved by my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him, v. 23. If any one love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.

1 Corinth. ii. 14. The sensual man receiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, &c.

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THE

LIFE

OF THE

HOLY MOTHER ST. TERESA,

ABRIDGED FROM HER OWN WRITINGS.

CHAPTER I.

How our Lord began to call her to his divine love from her childhood, by the reading of good books. Her desire to die for Christ. She takes the blessed Virgin for her mother.

THE holy mother Teresa of Jesus was born at Avila, a city of Castile, Anno 1515, of honourable and virtuous parents. Her father Alphonsus de Cepeda delighted in reading good books, of which he kept a good store, in Spanish, that his children might also read them. He was a man very charitable to the poor, compassionate to the sick, and tender to his servants: one of much truth, and very averse from detraction, and swearing, and exceedingly modest and chaste. Her mother, Beatrice de Ahumada, was also endowed with many virtues, and passed her life in great afflictions and grievous sicknesses, in a most christian manner; and made a

happy end at the age of three and thirty. From these pious parents the little Teresa received very early impressions of piety: so that being as yet but six or seven years old, and delighting much in reading the lives of the Saints, and other spiritual books, treating of eternity; she had already learnt to despise all that passes with the world for happiness, for the sake of the study of eternal truth. In reading these books, she associated herself with her little brother Rodrigo, who was about the same age. "And we found ourselves," says she, (*Life*, chap. i.) "much amazed to perceive in those things which we read, that both the pain and the glory of the next life was to last for ever; and we should be often speaking of this, and we took pleasure in repeating these words many times, *for ever, for ever, for ever*; and by continuing to pronounce them long and often, our Lord was pleased to imprint the way of truth upon my heart, in that very infancy of mine."

"When (in reading the lives of the Saints") says she, (*Life*, chap. i.) "I saw the martyrdoms through which some of them had passed for the love of our Lord, methought they had bought heaven (where they were to see and enjoy his divine majesty) very cheap; and I myself also desired much to die so, that I might come by so compendious a way to enjoy these great felicities which I had read to be imparted in heaven. I associated myself, therefore, with this brother of mine, to consider upon the means of our obtaining this end; and we resolved we would go into the country of the Moors, begging all the way for the love of God, that so we might be beheaded there. And it seemed that our Lord gave us courage enough in that tender age of ours, if we could have found any means to have brought it about." In effect they attempted it, and were gone out of the town

"for

for that purpose; but their uncle met with them on the road, and brought them back to their father's house.

"When I saw," says she, "it was impossible for me to go where they might put me to death for the love of our Lord, my brother and I projected how we might become hermites at home; and for this purpose, in a certain garden which belonged to the house, we endeavoured to make ourselves hermitages the best we could, by piling up little stones, which would presently be falling down again, so that we met with no means to put our good desires into execution. In the mean time, I gave alms as well as I could, though it were but little. I procured to be much alone, for the better doing my devotions, which were many, and especially that of the rosary, to which my mother was much affected; and I took particular contentment, whilst I was playing with other children, like myself, to frame certain little monasteries, as if we had been nuns; and I seemed to desire to be one, though not with so strong a desire, as I did those other things, which I spoke of before.

"I remember that when my mother died, she left me a little less than twelve years old. I was very much afflicted when I began to understand how great a loss I had sustained in losing her; and so I went before a picture of our blessed lady, and besought her with tears, that she would vouchsafe to be my mother. And though I performed this little action in a plain and simple manner, yet methinks I may well conceive that it had served me to very good purpose, for I have most evidently found the favour of this sovereign virgin, with relation to all things wherein I have recommended myself to her." So far the Saint.

CHAPTER II.

The harm she received from reading romances, and from young giddy company.

AND here, in the sequel of the history of her life, she laments that after such good beginnings as these, and continuing in these pious dispositions till she was a little more than fourteen years of age (in which time, she says, she is much inclined to think she never forfeited the favour of God by any mortal sin, nor lost the fear of his divine Majesty) she began to relax in her devotion, and to be in love with vanity and idle conversation. The first step towards this unhappy change, was her reading romances, to which she grew so much affected, as to spend many hours both of the day and night in so vain and dangerous an exercise: though she took care to conceal this all the while from her father, who had a great aversion to books of that nature; and would not, if he had known of it, suffered them in his house. But what did her still greater harm, was the company and conversation of other young people, especially of a kinswoman of hers, one about her own age, who was very vain, and fond of all the dangerous amusements and idle diversions of this deluded and deluding world. With this cousin, and another of the like disposition, she began to delight to converse, and willingly gave ear to all their discourses about their vanities, and fooleries, and the successes of their loves: Like them she began to make herself fine, and to desire to grow acceptable by seeming handsome, though without any ill intention, for she ever abhorred all impurity; and would not, as she says, upon any terms, that any one should

should offend God by her means. However she did not avoid the occasions that carried danger with them, liking to pass her time in such company as was no ways proper for her, and in what worldlings call pleasant conversation, till she was so far changed for the worse, as to seem to have quite put off her former inclinations to piety and devotion; and to have put on the opposite spirit of the love of worldly pleasures and idle pastimes.

But three months had scarce passed in these vanities, when our Lord was pleased to remove her out of the way of these dangerous temptations; for her eldest sister who had the care of her at home being married, her father sent her to be a pensioner in a nunnery of the order of St. Austin, where amongst such *good religious women, as,* she says, *they were in an eminent degree in that house, and of great purity, observance, and recollection,* her soul was quickly awakened, and began again to accustom itself to the good impressions she had received in her childhood. So great a matter it is to be brought into good company.

CHAPTER. III.

She recovers her former piety by the help of godly conversation and good books, and desires to enter into religion.

IN this monastery one of the nuns was lodged in the apartment allotted for the pensioners, whose discourses were greatly serviceable to her soul. "I began," says she, (chap. iii.) "to take pleasure in the good and holy conversation of this religious woman, and was delighted to hear how well she was wont to speak of God, for she was very holy and discreet; and I conceive I never did at any time cease to be glad to hear such discourse. She told me one day how she became a religious woman, by the only reading of that place of the gospel, that *many are called but few chosen*; and she spoke much to me of the reward which our Lord is wont to give to such as leave all things for the love of him. In a word, this good company of hers began quickly to put to flight those customs and conditions, which ill company had brought upon me, and restore the desires of eternal things to my thoughts; yea and to remove in some part that great opposition which I had against being a nun. And now if I chanced to see any one who shed many tears when she prayed, or was endued with other virtues, I carried a kind of envy towards her; though as for this heart of mine, it was so very hard, and even impenetrable in this kind, that if I should have read over the whole history of the passion of our blessed Saviour, I was not able to shed a tear; and this gave me a great deal of pain.

"In

" In this monastery did I remain a year and a half; and I was much improved there: I began to say many vocal prayers; and I begged of all the religious, that they would recommend me much to God, to the end that he might place me in that way of life, in which I might be likely to serve him best. At the end of the time, I already began to be more inclined to be a religious woman; though yet not in that house, where I was then, in regard of those actions of extraordinary virtue and penance, which I understood they used; and which seemed to me of too much rigour. I had also a great friend in another monastery; and this was partly a reason why, if I were to be a religious woman, I would not choose to be so in any other place than where that friend of mine was. For I had more regard to the gratifying my sensuality and vanity, than to the benefit I might bring to my soul.

" At this time our Lord, in order to dispose me for that state of life which would be best for my salvation, sent me so great a sickness, that I was forced to return home to my father's house. After I was recovered, they conducted me to make a visit to one of my sisters in the country. In the way, I called to see an uncle, my father's brother, who was a very discreet man, and of great virtue. He was a widower; and our Lord was then more and more disposing him for his divine service: and when he grew older he quite left the world, and became a religious man; and ended his life in such sort, that I believe he now enjoys the vision of God. He would needs have me as I passed, remain with him some days. His usual exercise was to read good books; and his discourse was most commonly of God, and of the vanity of the world: and these good books he would also make me read. And though I stayed not long in that place, yet

yet by the effect, which the words of God wrought in my heart, whether they were read, or heard by me, together with so good company; I came to understand this truth, which I had learned when I was yet a child; viz. that all was nothing; and how great the vanity of the world was; and that all would be shortly at an end; and that I might justly fear, lest dying in that condition wherein I was, I might chance to drop down into hell. And though my will did not yet entirely determine me to make myself a religious woman, yet I well discerned, that it was the better, and more secure state; and so by little and little, I resolved to force my heart to embrace it. In this conflict I remained three months, spurring myself on with this consideration, that the troubles and afflictions of a religious life could not be greater than the pains of purgatory; and that I having so well deserved hell, ought not to think it too much, if I should remain for the short time I should live here, as it were in purgatory; so that afterwards I might go straight to heaven; for this was my desire. But yet even in this inclination of mine to take this state upon me, I doubt I was more moved by a kind of servile fear than by (pure) love. The devil in the mean time represented to me, that I should never be able to suffer the difficulties and troubles of a religious life, because I had formerly been used so delicately, and was so tender. But yet against this also I defended myself as well as I could by the afflictions which Christ our Lord had endured for me, and that therefore it would not be much for me to endure some for him. I ought also to have considered that he would give me his grace to help me to bear them: though I don't remember whether I had this last consideration, or not: but I am sure I had temptations enough about that time. I then also grew to have great

fits

fits of fainting, by occasion of a burning fever, into which I fell; for I always had but little health.

" But it gave me even my life at that time, that I was already grown to love good books; and so I came to read the epistles of St. Jerom; which helped me to such a heart and courage, as to make me resolve to impart my design to my father: but he loved me to so strange a degree, that I could by no means obtain his consent. The most that I could get at his hands was, that when he should be dead, I might dispose of myself as I pleased. But as for me, I was dubious of my own great weakness, as fearing that I might thus lose ground, and fall back again: and therefore I thought it was not fit for me to content myself with the offer he made; but determined to obtain my end by another means, which I will now declare.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IV.

The dispositions with which she enters into religion: her falling sick, and her being removed into the country, for her cure: her practice of mental prayer: (Chap. iv.)

"IN these days, whilst I went on with this determination, I persuaded one of my brothers to become a religious man, by discoursing to him upon the vanity of the world: and so we both of us agreed to go very early together, one morning, to the monastery (of the Incarnation of the order of the Carmelites) where that friend of mine abode, to whom I bore so great an affection: though yet in this last firm purpose of mine, I was grown to such a resolution, that I would have lived wheresoever I thought I might serve God best; for now I sought more earnestly for the good of my soul, and made no account at all of rest or ease. And I remember (to the uttermost of what I can call to mind, and in very truth) that whilst I was going out of my father's house, the sharpness of sense I then felt was so extreme, that I believe it will not be greater in the agony of death: and there being no such love of God in me at that time, as was able to extinguish that love which my heart bore to my father, and to my friends, all that I then did was with so mighty a violence, that if God had not given me great help, my own consideration would never have been able to carry me on: but here he afforded me such courage, even against my own nature, that I had the power to put my purpose in execution.

"At the instant of my taking the habit, our Lord gave me well to understand how highly he favours those who

who offer themselves violence for the doing him any service; though yet no body else had found by me, but that I entered into the way of religious observance, with much facility and good liking. But at that very instant I received so great contentment, to put myself into that manner of life, as hath never failed me once to this very hour. And God changed that dryness, in which my soul had formerly been, into an extreme tenderness; and all the observances of religion gave me great delight: yea, and it is true, that whilst I was sometimes going up and down to sweep the house, at such hours as before I had been wont to employ in dressing out myself in vanities and pastimes, and considered that I was now free from all that slavery, it gave me a particular joy, and that so very great, that it even amazed me; nor was I able to understand whence the same should come. Here I know not how I can proceed, to think of any thing else, when I consider the manner of my profession, and the great resolution and tenderness of devotion with which I made it, and the espousals which I then perfected with thee, O thou my sovereign good, and the sweet repose of my soul! for I cannot speak of this without tears, (which ought to be even of blood) nor without the breaking of my very heart, when I reflect how deeply I offended thee afterwards.

" In the mean time the change which I made in my way of living, and the difference of my diet at this time from the former, began to do me hurt in the way of my health, notwithstanding the great contentment which I felt in that state of life. Fits of fainting and swooning began to increase upon me, and a pain of my heart so great, as amazed all them that saw it, besides many other infirmities. And thus I passed through my first year, with a very infirm health: though yet within that time

time I conceive myself not to have offended God much. But now my sickness being so great, that it deprived me almost, yea sometimes altogether, of my senses: the diligences which my father used for my recovery were also very great; and when the doctors of those parts found no remedy, he procured to have me removed to a certain place, where there was great talk of the curing of many other infirmities, and so they assured themselves that mine also would be cured. That friend, whom I mentioned to be in that house (sister Jane Suarez) who was of years, went with me: for in the monastery where we lived, they made no vow of enclosure. I stayed almost a year in that place, and during three months thereof, I suffered so excessive torments by the manner of the cure, which was very rigorous, that I know not how I was able to endure them.

" This cure was to be taken in hand in the beginning of summer, and I went in the beginning of winter. In the mean while I remained in the house of that sister, of whom I spoke before, who dwelt in the country near the place. When I departed from my uncle, whom I had visited in my way to her, he gave me a certain book entitled the Third Alphabet (of F. Ossuna) which treats of the prayer of *Recollection* and *Quiet*. Now though in that first year I had read some good books, forbearing utterly to look upon any others (as knowing the hurt which such as these had done me,) yet I knew not how to proceed in mental prayer, nor how to obtain recollection; and so I was very glad of this book, and determined to follow that way which it recommended, to the uttermost of my power. And since our Lord had already been pleased to bestow the gift of tears upon me; and since I delighted also in reading, I began to spend

spend a good part of my time in solitude, and to confess myself very often, and in a word, to proceed by that way, taking that book for my master.

" In these beginnings his divine Majesty began to do me so great favours, that during the time which I remained there (which was about nine months) in this way of solitude; though I was not so free from offending God as the book directed, our Lord began to give me the prayer of *Quiet* (or repose of the soul, forgetting all things else, and resting in the contemplation of God,) and sometimes it came so far as to arrive at union (of the powers of the soul absorpt in God) though at that time I neither understood the one nor the other, nor knew how much they both of them deserved to be valued. True it is that this union continued with me but for a very short time; yet the effects it produced in me were so very great, that whereas I was not then so much as twenty years old, methought I found the whole world under my feet; and so I remember well that I was wont to have a great compassion for such as followed the ways of the world, though it were but even in lawful things.

" I endeavoured the best I could to carry our Lord, our true good, still present within me: and this was the manner of my prayer. If I thought upon any passage or mystery, I represented it in my own interior; though I spent more of my time in reading books, which was all the recreation that I had. For God gave me not the talent of discoursing with the understanding, nor to help myself by the use of my imagination. Now, although by this way of not being able to employ and set the understanding to work, in the way of discourse, men may sooner arrive at contemplation, if they persevere therein; yet it is very troublesome and painful: and for those

that

that proceed thus, it will be expedient, or even absolutely necessary, to make use of a book; for reading greatly helps to recollect a person in this case, even though what he reads were but little: without this, it would have been impossible for me, for eighteen years to have endured that extreme difficulty and those great aridities which I suffered, through my not being able, as I was saying, to discourse (by the understanding). In all these times I never durst begin to pray (mentally) without a book in my hand, unless it were presently after having received the holy communion; and my soul was as heartily afraid to enter upon prayer, without a book, as if I had been to fight with a multitude of people. But by the help of a good book, which was as a guard or as a buckler, with which I might defend myself against the assaults of many distracting thoughts, I went on with comfort; but whensoever I had no book in my hand, my soul was instantly in disorder, and my thoughts wandered up and down, till, by reading, I began to recollect them, and then my heart went on chearfully and delightfully; yea and many times in the very opening of my book, I found myself to need no more. Sometimes also I read little, and sometimes much, according to the favour which our Lord was pleased to do me, more or less. And it seems to me, that if in those beginnings, of which I am speaking, I had had books, and means to continue in solitude, there could have been no danger which would have been able to have deprived me of so great a good (God's favour): and indeed the time which I then spent in God's service, did me very much good towards the bearing those terrible sicknesses, which I endured with so great patience, as his divine Majesty vouchsafed to bestow upon me.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

What she suffered under her cure for three months; the extremity of her disease, her trance of four days.

" I forgot to relate, (says the Saint, Chap. v.) how in the year of my noviceship, there was a religious woman in the monastery, sick of a very grievous infirmity, which put her to extreme pain; for she had certain ulcers in her body, which grew from some great obstructions, and by these she discharged whatsoever she took. She died, in a short time, of that disease, and whereas I found that all the rest of our community had great apprehension and fear of the like, for my part, I much envied her patience; and I begged of God, that if he would but be pleased to favour me with that virtue, (patience), he would send me what sicknesses he should think fit: and I thought I feared no disease in the world, for I was so bent and set upon the gaining of eternal happiness, that I was resolved to compass it, how dear soever it might cost me. I am not without wonder at this, for at that time I possessed not to my thinking, such a love of God as afterwards I conceived myself to have, upon my beginning to frequent the exercise of mental prayer. But only I was grown to have a certain light, which shewed me how little esteem all such things deserve, which must quickly have an end, and how mightily those blessings are to be valued, which are eternal, and may be obtained by us at so cheap a rate. His divine Majesty did also hear me in this, for before two years were expired, I came to be in such a condition, that howsoever my disease were not of that other sort, yet I believe that this, which

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I had for three years together, was not a whit of less trouble and torment to me, than that other was to her, as I shall now relate.

"The time being now come, I was conducted to the place where my cure was to be taken in hand, by my father, my sister, and that religious woman, my friend, who loved me much; where I remained three months with extreme affliction, for the cure was by much too hard for my complexion; insomuch that at the end of two months of those three, the roughness of those remedies did even, as it were, make an end of my very life; and withal the rigour of that sickness of my heart, of which I went to be cured, was grown to be much more violent; in such sort that sometimes it seemed to me as if my very heart had been pierced and penetrated with sharp teeth, so that they were afraid I should run mad. Together with this great loss of strength (for I was able to take no food at all, except it were liquid, and that with great reluctance) I had a continual burning fever, and I was quite consumed, for they had daily given me a purge for almost a whole month together; and indeed I was even so burnt up, that my sinews began all to shrink, and this with so insupportable a torment, that I could not take any rest either by day or night; and all this while I was also oppressed with a most profound sadness of mind.

"With such a kind of gain as this, in point of health, my father brought me back to his own house, where the physicians came to visit me again; and they all gave me utterly over, for they said that besides all the rest, I was settled in a hectic fever. But this troubled me very little, for that which afflicted me most was the sharp and bitter pain which never left me, but affected me even all alike from head to foot; for the torment of the sinews

is an intolerable kind of thing, as the doctors affirm, and especially when they all shrink up, as mine did. I continued not above three months in this rage of pain, and indeed it seemed even a kind of impossible thing for me to endure such a complication of evils all together: and now I am even amazed at myself, and I hold for a great favour of our Lord, the patience which his divine Majesty was then pleased to give me, for it was evident that it came from him. It assisted me also much towards the having this patience, that I had read the history of Job, in the Morals of St. Gregory; and our Lord seems to have prepared me by that means, as also by my having begun in such manner to use mental prayer, as that I might be able to bear my pain with much conformity to his holy will. The conversation of my heart was wholly with him; and I had those words of Job very usually, both in my thoughts and in my mouth, *If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?* Job ii. 10, and I conceived that this helped me to give me courage.

"At length came the feast of our blessed lady in August (the Assumption) for till then, from the April before, had my torment continued; though yet it had been greater in the three last months. I then desired to go to confession; for I ever took much contentment to confess often. My friends thought it was the fear of death which incited me to be so devout; and therefore that I might not be put into greater apprehension, my father would not let me confess. O inordinate and irregular love of flesh and blood! which though I had so catholic a father, and one so full of prudence and consideration as he was, in all his actions, might have done me hurt enough! That very night I fell into such a trance, as continued to keep me near four days without

the use almost of any of my senses. They gave me the extreme unction; and every hour, or rather every moment, expected I should expire: they frequently repeated the creed to me, as if I had understood them: and sometimes they held me for so certainly dead, that afterwards I found the drops of the holy wax candles upon my eyes. The affliction of my father was great, for his not having permitted me to go to confession. And many cries and prayers were made to God for me; and blessed be he who was pleased to hear them! For the vault having remained open, in the church of my monastery, a day and a half, where my body was expected to be interred, and the office for my funeral having been already celebrated by the religious men of our order in another town, where it was conceived that I was dead, our Lord was yet pleased at length that I should return to myself; and then I instantly desired to go to confession. I received also the blessed sacrament, with many tears; though yet in my opinion they were not shed with that (perfect) sense and grief, only for my having offended God: for the torments with which I then remained, were intolerable, and my understanding dull; though, as I conceived, my confession was entire, of all things by which I might think I had offended God. For this mercy did his divine Majesty vouchsafe to allow me, amongst others, that after I began to receive the blessed sacrament, I never omitted to confess any thing which I conceived to be a sin, though it were but venial. Yet still methinks my soul might have run a hazard of not being saved, if I had died then; in regard that on the one side my ghostly fathers (who had told me that some things were not mortal sins, which afterwards I plainly understood to be such) had been so meanly learned; and on the other side, I so wicked."

wicked." So far the saint, in her humble way of thinking and speaking of herself, and according to the apprehensions she had of those three months, which she had formerly spent in worldly vanities and dangerous pastimes. But the historians of her life (Bishop Yepez and father Ribera, who both of them had been for some time her confessors) inform us, that in this four days trance she saw wonderful things with regard to the other world; and learned by revelation all that should befal her with respect to the reformation of her order, &c. In proof of which they assure us, that as soon as she returned to herself, she spoke of these things to those that stood about her, and complained that her father, and sister Suarez, (the nun her companion) had called her away out of heaven. And though she was afterwards greatly ashamed of her having spoken in this manner, and was very desirous to put it off, and to make it pass for a delirium; yet the event, perfectly answering all the particulars, which she then foretold, sufficiently demonstrated that it was a true revelation.

CHAPTER VI.

She is carried back to her monastery, where she continues to suffer for three years with much patience and conformity to God's will: she is cured by the intercession of St. Joseph.

" remained," continues the saint, " during those four days of agony or trance, in such state, that only our blessed Lord is able to know the unsufferable torments which I felt in myself. My tongue I had deeply bitten in many places. My throat, with having taken nothing, and by reason also of my very great weakness, could not swallow so much as a drop of water, without perfectly choaking. Methought I was totally disjointed, and my head in extreme disorder. I was also, as it were, all rolled up and contracted, as if I had been a bottom of packthread; for the torments of those days terminated themselves in this, without being able of myself once to stir either hand or foot, arm or head, any more than if I had been dead; only I think I was able to wag one single finger of my right hand. Nor could I suffer any body to touch me in any kind, for my whole person was so affected and afflicted, that there was no enduring to be touched. But they would be removing me now and then in a sheet, according as there was occasion, with one at one end thereof, and another at the other; and this lasted till Easter. Only this I had by the way of ease, that if they did not approach to me, and touch me, these torments would relent many times; and then, upon the account of my being in less pain, I was content to affirm myself to be well. But indeed I was much afraid, lest my patience should begin to fail

fail me; and therefore I was not a little pleased to find myself without those sharp and continual torments, though yet in the cold fits of a double quartan, which I had very violent, I suffered these pains still after an unsupportable manner, together with a very great detestation of all food.

"At this time I so earnestly solicited my return to the monastery, that I got myself to be carried away as I was: and they received her, whom they had expected for dead, with a soul, which was indeed as yet in the body; but with a body worse than dead, through the pain they saw it endured. The great extremity of my weakness cannot be expressed, for I had nothing left but skin and bones, and I continued thus above eight months, but was directly a cripple (though I were then on the mending hand) for near three years. When now I began to go creeping along, I thanked God, as for a good degree of amendment; and I passed through these afflictions with great conformity to the holy will of God, yea, and (unless it were in the very beginnings) with much alacrity and joy. For I esteemed it all as nothing in comparison with those pains and torments which I had undergone before, and I was wholly resigned then to God's holy will, although he should have left me in that state for ever. I am of opinion that all the anxiety of my desire to recover, was only, that I might apply myself to mental prayer all alone, as I had been instructed, for which I had no opportunity in the infirmary. In the mean time I confessed my sins very often; and I spoke much of God with them that were with me, in such sort, as that it edified them all; and indeed they were amazed to see the patience which our Lord imparted to me; for if it had not come from the hand of his divine Majesty, it seemed a kind of impossible

sible thing that I should endure such a deal of torments with so much contentment.

" What helped me most of all was that favour which our blessed Lord had vouchsafed to do me, in teaching me mental prayer, for this made me come to know what it was to love him; and after a little time spent therein, I found several virtues grow up afresh in me, though as yet they were not strong, &c. I spoke not evil of any creature living, and my ordinary custom was to avoid all manner of detraction; for I always had this thought present with me, that I was never to wish, nor to say, any such thing of any one, as I would not have them say of me; and I persuaded such as were used to be much in my company, so earnestly to this practice, that it grew also with them into a custom. By this means it came to be commonly understood, that wheresoever I chanced to be, all absent persons were safe. I remained with a great liking to enjoy solitude; and I also loved in a particular manner to discourse and treat of things concerning God, and I loved to confess and to communicate oftener than I had done, and to desire it very much; and to be extremely affected with reading good books; and to have so extraordinary a sorrow for having offended God, that many times I remember how I durst not venture to put myself in prayer (by way of meditating on that head) because I feared that excessive pain which I was sure to feel, as a great punishment for my offences; neither did this happen to me more or less from any fear at all, but only when I remembered those consolations which our Lord had vouchsafed to impart to me in my prayer, and the very much I owed to his divine Majesty for those high favours, and saw how ill I paid him for all his goodness, I was not able to endure it.

" All

" All these signs of my endeavouring to fear and serve God, came to me by prayer; and the greatest of them was that I walked, as it were, all wrapt up in love; for as to the punishment of sin, it never once appeared before me. All the while that I was so sick, I continued to keep a very close guard upon my conscience; for as much as might concern mortal sin. But O my dear Lord, how vehemently did I desire to be restored to my health, in order to serve thee better, whereas in very deed, this proved to be the occasion of my greater misery. But now when I found myself such a cripple, and that even whilst I was yet so young; and how the physicians of this world had treated me, and to what a condition they had brought me, I resolved that I would apply myself to those of the other world, to the end that they might cure me, for I still desired to recover my health, notwithstanding I endured my sickness with alacrity; and I would be thinking sometimes, that, if by enjoying my health I should run the risk of being damned, it would be far better for me to remain still as sick as I was; but, however, I conceived that I should serve God much better if I enjoyed health. Now this is the illusion and error which deceives us, not to resign ourselves entirely to the disposition and good pleasure of our Lord, who knows best what is fit for us."

Here the saint proceeds to speak of the spiritual means she made use of in order to her cure; and in particular how she applied herself for this end, to the intercession of St. Joseph, taking him for her patron and advocate; and how by his prayers she obtained to be able to rise and to walk, and to be no longer a cripple, whereupon she takes occasion to speak of the great interest of this saint with our Lord, which she had found by frequent experience; and to recommend very much

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the devotion to him, especially to all such as desire to give themselves to mental prayer. After which she goes on as follows.

" But now," says she, " who would ever have imagined that I would so soon fall back again, after my receiving so many favours at the hands of Almighty God; and after his divine Majesty had vouchsafed to give me virtues, which, (as it were, of themselves) did awake and stir me up to this service; and after I had seen myself in a manner dead, and in so great a danger of being condemned to hell; and after he had raised me again, both in body and soul, in such sort, that all they who saw me were amazed to find me alive? But what is the meaning of this, O my Lord? must we then still be living on in so perilous a life? Even now, whilst I am writing this, methinks by thy favour and mercy, I might say with St. Paul (though yet not with such perfection) that *now it is not I who live, but thou*, O my Creator, *who livest in me* (Gal. ii. 20.) and that according to the experience I have had for some years, by that little which I am able to understand of myself, thou still holdest me, and keepest thy hand over me; and I find myself full of desires, and of good purposes; and in some sort I have proved also (even by experience of many things, in these late years) that I would by no means do any thing which should contradict or cross thy will, how little soever it might be; though I doubt not but that I commit many offences against thy divine Majesty, even without my understanding it; and it also seems to me that there could not so hard a thing be set before me, which I would not execute with great resolution for the love of thee, and sometimes thou hast so assisted me therein, as that such things have taken effect; and for my part, I care not for the world, nor for any creature in it; nor

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can I find that any thing at all gives me delight, which turns away from thee; nay more it seems a very heavy cross to me. And yet (in all this) I may easily deceive myself, and so I think I do, for I doubt that I possess not all this of which I speak; but yet thou seest well, O my Lord, for as much as I am able to understand that I do not lie. And now I am in fear, and that with very much reason, lest perhaps thou shouldst yet leave me once again; for I need not now be told how short a way my strength is able to carry me; and how little virtue I have, if thou be not always at hand to give me thy blessing and help, to the end I may never forsake thee; yea and I beseech thy divine Majesty, that even now I be not already forsaken by thee, whilst I have this conceit of myself. For my part, I know not how we can desire to live, since all things are here so uncertain. It seemed to me before, O Lord, to be even an impossible thing, that I should so entirely forsake thee; but since I have forsaken thee so often, I cannot but fear the like again, because, when thou hast withdrawn thyself ever so little from me, all fell presently down to the ground. Blessed be thou for ever, O Lord, for howsoever I forsook thee, thou wouldst not entirely forsake me; but that still thou gavest me thy hand, that so I might be able to rise again, though many times, O Lord, I would not take hold of it; nor would I understand very often how thou vouchsafedst to call me again, as I will now declare."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VII.

She loses by degrees her fervor and devotion, by admitting of visits, and the conversation of seculars, so as to leave off for a time the exercise of mental prayer. Our Lord's interior apparition to her. The death of her father.

"I began from one pastime to another, from one vanity to another, and from one occasion to another, to cast myself deeply into so very great occasions, and to have my soul so disordered, (and dissipated) upon many vanities, that already I grew even ashamed to approach towards God, with so particular a kind of friendship and familiarity as frequent prayer requires; the more because, as my sins encreased, the gust and delight which I had found in the exercise of virtue, began to fail me. I perceived very clearly, O my Lord, that these good things were now wanting to me, because I had first been wanting to thee. But yet in the mean time this was the most terrible deceit, and the greatest harm, which the devil could possibly bring upon me, when he made me begin to fear to practise mental prayer, because I saw myself in so bad a way, that methought it would be better for me to proceed as the multitude did, since I was one of the worst of them that are wicked, and to pray but as much as I was bound to, and that but *vocally*; and that a person who deserved to be with the devil, was not to use *mental* prayer, nor to hold so close a communication with God as that was; and that all this while I did but seek to deceive the world, because exteriorly I made shew of virtue. In the mean time, for this reason, the house wherein

wherein I lived, did deserve no blame at all, because I procured, with my fair carriage all along, that they should have a good opinion of me: neither did I this on set purpose, by the way of counterfeiting piety, for touching this point of hypocrisy or of vain glory, I humbly thank God, that I remember not myself to have offended him therein, for ought I can perceive; for upon the very first motion to commit that kind of sin, I ever received, and felt so much trouble, that the devil was wont to go away with loss, and therefore he did not tempt me much in this kind; nay, rather it troubled me much that they should hold me in so good opinion, considering what I knew of myself. But the true reason of their believing me not to be so wicked, was that they saw me, being so young, to retire myself many times, and upon several occasions, to solitude, and to pray, and read much, and to talk of God, &c. And upon these observations of theirs, they allowed me as much, yea and more liberty, than to the more ancient religious women of the house, and they were confident of me in all things; for as to my taking liberties to myself, or to do any thing at all without leave, yea or to speak with any body in corners or by night, was what I could never think of, nor did I in any thing like this, because our Lord held me up in his hand. Nor was that evil which I was guilty of, performed by me with so much reflection and advertance as this must have been; wherefore I am of opinion that it did me much hurt, that I was in a monastery which was not enclosed, a liberty which they that were good might well enjoy, without any disadvantage to their goodness, since they did not promise enclosure; but as for me, who am so wicked, it would certainly have carried me down to hell, unless our Lord had drawn me out of this danger, by very many remedies and means, and most extraordinary favours."

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And here it may be proper to observe, that these evils and dangers, which the Saint so greatly aggravates in the history of her life, had chiefly relation to her receiving visits from abroad, as her monastery was not enclosed, and as, by reason of her excellent endowments, many persons of the world were fond of her company and conversation. Now these visits, besides occasioning a great loss of her precious time, filled her mind with distractions, to the great prejudice of her prayer, and softened her soul (though not with a sensual or carnal love) with a certain tenderness of affection to her visitors, which divided and captivated her heart, and took it off, in some measure at least, from her heavenly Spouse, to whom she owed it all. But let us hear herself.

"In the mean time," says she, "when I began to use such conversations as these, I little thought that so great distraction and other damages would come to my soul, by such kind of acquaintances, when I saw they were so much used by others; and I conceived that so general a thing as it is, to make visits in many monasteries, would be of no greater prejudice to me than it was to others, whom I saw to be virtuous and good. But I considered not the while that those others were much more virtuous than myself; and that those things which were of much danger to me, were not perhaps of so very great danger to them, though yet I fear they must be of some, and at the best, I am sure enough, that it is no better than time very ill employed. Being once with a certain person, our Lord was pleased to give me to understand, in the very beginning of our acquaintance, that such friendships would be no way convenient for me: for Christ our Lord represented himself before me with much rigour (in his countenance), and gave me well to understand

stand how greatly he was disgusted at my proceeding. I saw him only with the eyes of my soul, but yet much more distinctly and more clearly than I could possibly have done with the eyes of my body; and he remained so deeply imprinted there, that although it happened to me above six and twenty years ago, methinks he is still as present to me now as he was then; but I am sure I remained so altered, yea and so astonished, that I intended to see that person no more. It did me a great deal of hurt that I knew not, at that time, that it was possible for one to see any thing but with the eyes of the body; and the devil was careful enough to continue me in that erroneous opinion, and to make me still believe that it was impossible, and therefore that I had but fancied these things to myself, and that perhaps it might be a work of the devil: though yet still I was very confidently of opinion that it was God, and no conceit or fancy at all; but because it induced me to do things which were against my inclination, I did the best I could even to lie to myself. And forasmuch as I durst not confer with any body about this particular, and found myself greatly importuned to it, being assured that it could not be ill done to see such a person as that, and that there would be no loss, but rather gain of honour by it, I returned to the same conversation, yea and also, at other times, in like manner to others; for there were many years wherein I took this pestilential recreation, and when I was once far embarked therein, it seemed not to me to be so very ill as indeed it was, though still sometimes I discerned clearly enough that it was not good. But yet no other conversation distracted me so much, as this in particular did, by reason of the great affection which I bore to the party. Another time, when I was in company with the same person, we both

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of us saw, coming towards us (and there were others also present who saw it too) something in the shape of a great toad, which passed on with much more speed than such creatures use to do. For my part I was not able to conceive how such a filthy beast as that should get into that room, through that part from whence it came, and even at noon day; nor had ever any such thing been seen there. The effect which it wrought in me seems not to have been void of some mystery; and this was also a thing which I could never forget. O greatness of my God! with how much care and pity didst thou admonish me in so many kinds, and by so many ways; and how little did I permit that all these warnings should help me? There was also in the house a certain ancient nun of my kindred, a great servant of God, who would be sometimes giving me good counsel; but I did not only not believe her, but was also disgusted with her, as conceiving that she took offence at me without cause. And all this I here relate, to the end that both my wickedness, and the great goodness of Almighty God, may be the better understood, and that it may appear how well I deserved hell for my great ingratitude: and I do it also to this end, that if our Lord should so ordain, and should be pleased that any religious woman should read this discourse, they may be careful to take warning by me: and I beg of them that, for the love of our Lord, they will take heed of such recreations as these. And I beseech his divine Majesty, that some one of them may be disabused, whom I have deceived, by telling them there was no harm nor danger in these things.

" But now, even whilst I was yet much indisposed in those first days before I knew how to help myself, I grew to have an extreme desire to do others good, which

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is a very ordinary temptation for new beginners, though it happened to succeed well with me; and considering how dearly I loved my father, I wished him the self-same benefit, which I conceived myself to have gained by means of mental prayer, and being of opinion that, in this life, there was no greater blessing than to obtain and enjoy that gift, I began by certain ways of discourse to procure the best I could, that he would endeavour to obtain it, and I gave him certain books for this purpose. Now he being a man of so much virtue, as I have already declared, set himself so diligently to this exercise, that he came within five or six years to be so well improved and advanced therein, that I blessed our Lord very much for the favour, and it gave me an extreme consolation. The troubles and crosses which he endured were very great, and of many kinds; and he passed through them all with much conformity to the will of our Lord. He came to see me often, and was greatly comforted in treating of spiritual things. And when now I lived so distracted that I had left off mental prayer, and saw that he conceived me to be still the very same that I had been before, I was not able to endure it without undeceiving him: for I had passed a year or more without mental prayer, as thinking it more humility for me to abstain, which was the greatest and worst temptation that ever I had, for by this means I ran headlong upon my total ruin; whereas, when I frequented prayer, if I offended God one day, I returned to recollect myself on another, and so to remove further from the occasion. Wherefore my father coming to see me in that state, and thinking that I still conversed with God, as formerly I had done, it was too much for me to see him so far deceived; and so I told him, that I did no longer use mental prayer; yet I did not tell him the

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cause thereof, but I alledged my infirmities for the reason. For although I were recovered of the main sickness, I had yet diseases, yea, and very great ones still: and although of late they have not assaulted me with so very great fierceness as before, yet they fail not still to continue, and to exercise me also in many kinds, and I am almost never without many kinds of pain, and sometimes they are very sharp ones, and especially at my heart: but I have made so little account of these sufferings for these last eight years, that sometimes I am even glad I have them, as conceiving that our Lord may be perhaps served in some manner thereby. My father believed me that this was the cause of my omission; for he being very sincere himself, and considering of what matter I was then discoursing to him, he had no reason to think but that I said true; and to the end that he might believe me the better, I told him also then, that I had enough to do to be able to assist at the choir: though yet in very deed even this reason of corporal weakness was no sufficient cause to make me give over so good a thing; for there is no need of corporal strength for such things as these, but only of love and custom, since our Lord will afford us always some opportunity, if we ourselves have a good will. I say always, because, though infirmities and other occasions may hinder one sometimes from spending many hours in solitude, yet there will not want some other time wherein we may have health enough for this business: yea, and even in other occasions, as also in the midst of sickness itself, the best of prayer may be made (by a soul which loves) by offering up such pain to Almighty God, and remembering for whose sake she endures it, and conforming herself to God's holy will therein, and in a thousand other such things as will occur. For it is

a mistake

a mistake to think that prayer can only be made in solitude. If we will take a little care, we may obtain great blessings when our Lord even takes time for prayer from us by means of our sicknesses and pains; and I myself found this to be true, as long as my conscience was pure and good. But my father, through the opinion which he held of me, and the love he bore me, not only believed all I had said, but pitied me: and being now come to find himself in so eminent a degree of spiritual life, remained not very long with me, as holding his stay there to be loss of time, and therefore returned home. And I, who was willing to spend my time upon other vanities, was not troubled very much at his departure.

" But it was not only with him, but with other persons also, that I procured that they should addict themselves to mental prayer, even whilst I was walking in those vanities; for still as I found them well affected to vocal prayer, I told them how they should use meditation, and gave them books, and I did them good; for I had still a great desire that others should serve God, even from the very first time that I used mental prayer. And this I here relate, to shew the great blindness in which I was, which exposed me to the danger of losing myself, whilst yet I was procuring to do good to others.

" About this time my father fell ill of the sickness of which he died. I went to attend him, whilst myself was more sick in soul than he was in body, through many vanities of mine; though yet not in such sort, as that according to my apprehension I was in mortal sin, even in all this worst and wickedest time whereof I am speaking: for certainly if I had thought so, I should by no means have continued therein. I endured some affliction and trouble in his sickness, and, I think, made some

part of a poor amends for the pains he had taken with me in mine; for now being ill enough myself, I yet strained very hard to do him service. I animated myself also in such manner as not to shew him that I was in any pain, but continued, even till he expired, as if I felt no trouble at all, though yet it be very true, that when I saw him come to be upon the point of death, it seemed to me as if my own very soul had then been torn out of my body, for I loved him much.

" It was a subject of great praise to our Lord to see the death which my father died, together with the desire which he had to leave this world, and the counsel which he gave us after he had received extreme unction, and how he charged us to recommend him to God; and that we should beg mercy of him for his soul; and that we should ever serve him, and consider that all this world must come to an end. He told us also with tears, how much he was grieved at the heart for not having served his divine Majesty better, and that he wished he had been a religious man, and that of the strictest order that was. I hold it for certain, that some fifteen days before, our Lord gave him to understand that he was to die; because, before that time he did not think himself very ill, though he were so; but afterwards, though he seemed to mend much in point of health, and though the doctors said so, yet he made no account of that, but only attended to the putting his soul in good order. That sickness of his began with a very grievous pain in his shoulders, which never left him; and sometimes it oppressed him so, that his affliction was very great. I told him once upon this occasion, that since he had been so much devoted to that mystery, when our Lord carried his cross upon his shoulders, he might do well to conceive that his divine Majesty had been pleased to give

him

him a feeling of some part of that which himself had undergone with so much trouble: and he was so comforted with this consideration, that I remember not to have heard him complain any more. He remained for three days with very little show of understanding; but on the day he died, our Lord restored it to him, and that so entirely, that we were all even amazed to see it; and so he continued, till saying the creed, when he had come to the middle of it he expired. When he was dead, he looked even like an angel. His confessor, who was a * Dominican, and a very learned man, affirmed that he made no doubt but that my father would go straight to heaven; for he, who had received his confessions divers years, spoke much of the great purity of his conscience.

" This Dominican father, being a very worthy man, and a true servant of God, did me a great deal of good; for I confessed myself to him, and he undertook the care of my soul with much diligence, and took pains to make me understand the way of perdition wherein I was walking. He caused me also to communicate every fifteen days; and when I spoke to him about my prayer, he told me I must not fail to use it, and that it could not by any means but do me good. I began, therefore, to use it again, and from that time forward I never left it; though yet I did not presently give over the occasions of my imperfections.

" I therefore, in the mean time, passed a most sad life; for in my prayer I came to understand my faults, so that on the one side I was called by God, and on the

* The Dominican she here speaks of was father Vincent Varron, the same of whom she writes in the third chapter of the foundation of the monastery of Avila; who, by the help of her prayers, was advanced to an eminent degree of sanctity.

other I followed the world. All those things which belonged to God gave me great satisfaction, but those things which were of the world held me in chains; and it seems I had a mind to reconcile these two contraries, which are so much at enmity with one another; namely, a spiritual life on the one side, and sensual delights and pastimes on the other.

" In my prayer I endured much trouble, because now my spirit was not *master*, but a *slave*, and therefore I was not able to shut myself up in my heart (which was the only way of proceeding I formerly had held in my prayer) without shutting up together with me a thousand vanities. And in this manner I passed so many years, that now I am astonished to consider that any person should be able to endure the not leaving the one or the other in so long a time. O! that I could declare the occasions of doing ill, which God removed from me in those years, and how I put myself again into them, and the dangers from which he freed me. I ceased not to discover, by my actions, what kind of a creature I was; and he to cover these faults, and to discover some little virtue of mine, if there were any, and to make the same seem great in the eyes of all men, in such sort, as that they ever held me in much account.

" But O thou Lord of my soul, how shall I ever be able to express, with fulness and clearness enough, the favours which thou shewedst me in all those years? and how in that very time, when I was offending thee most, thou madest such haste to dispose my soul to a most profound remorse and sorrow, that so I might come quickly to taste of thy consolations and great favours again. The truth is, O my King, that in this thou didst use the most exquisite and most sharp kind of punishment which could possibly (to my thinking) be found for me;

me; as one who didst well understand what would prove most afflictive to me; for really it was much more painful and insupportable to me to receive such favours upon the very neck of my having fallen into so great offences, than it would have been to endure the greatest punishments; so that any one of those particular favours thus received, seems to have even quite defeated me, and confounded and afflicted me more than many corporal infirmities and other troubles all put together would have done: for as for these latter, I found that I deserved them well, and I thought I made some satisfaction by them for my sins; though all indeed were but little with respect to my offences. But now to see myself receiving afresh so high favours, whilst I made so ill a return for those I had received before, was, in my way of thinking, a most terrible torment, and I think it will be esteemed so by all such as have any knowledge or love of God. Hence proceeded my tears, together with an indignation to consider what I found in myself; for I saw that I was still upon the point of returning to fall again, though my purposes and desires of amendments (as long as those favours lasted) seemed to be strong and firm."

CHAPTER VIII.

The manner of her proceeding after her returning to the exercise of mental prayer: she persuades all persons to use it.

" I should be glad that all such persons as may read this account of my proceedings, should abhor me; to see a soul so obstinate and so ungrateful towards him who had vouchsafed her so great favours. And I wish I could get leave to declare that multitude of times that I failed of my obligation to God, in this number of years, by reason that I was not supported by this strong pillar of *mental* prayer. I passed through this tempestuous sea almost twenty years, between these fallings and risings, (though I rose imperfectly enough, since I returned again so quickly to fall) in this kind of life, tending towards perfection in so low a way, as that I made no account at all of venial sins; and as for such as were mortal, I feared them, it is true, yet not so much as I ought, since I avoided not the dangers of them. Now this was one of the most painful kinds of life that can possibly be imagined; for I neither enjoyed the sweetness of God, nor yet the satisfactions of the world. When I entertained myself with the amusements of the world, the remembrance of what I owed to my God gave me pain; and whilst I was conversing in prayer with his divine Majesty, the inclinations and affections I had to the world, disturbed and disquieted me; and this was a conflict so very irksome, that I know not how it was possible for me to endure it for one month, much more for so many years: and I clearly see the great mercy which God shewed me herein, that dealing so much

much as I did with the world, I could still have the courage to give myself to *mental* prayer. I say *courage*, for as for me, I see not one thing in the world in which there seems to be need of a greater, than to be carrying on treason against a king, and to be sensible that he knows it well, and yet never to depart out of his presence. For howsoever it be very true that we are always in the presence of God, yet methinks that they who converse with him in mental prayer are in his presence after a more particular manner, for they are seeing then that he sees them; whereas, others may perhaps remain some days in his presence without remembering that he looks upon them. True it is, that within that time there were, I believe, many months, and sometimes perhaps a whole year, that I kept myself from offending our Lord, and gave myself much to prayer; and I also used some, yea, many diligences, that I might never return to offend him more: which I here declare, because what I write now is to be delivered with entireness of truth; but I remember little of those good days, and therefore it may be thought they were few, and the evil ones many; yet few days passed without my allowing a considerable time for mental prayer, unless I were very sick or extremely busy. Yea, the worse I was in health, the more I was united with God; and I procured that such persons as used to be with me at those times, might be so too; and I begged it of our Lord, and we spoke very often of him. And so, unless it were for that one year, of which I have spoken, of the eight and twenty years which have passed since I began first to use mental prayer, I have endured this battle and strife, from treating both with God and the world more than eighteen.

" Now the reason why I have related all this, is: First to the end that the mercy of almighty God, together

ther with my ingratitude, may be well discerned; and secondly, that it may be also understood how great a blessing God bestows on that soul, which he disposes to use mental prayer with a good will, even though she were not as yet so very well disposed for it as she should be. For if she persevere therein, whatsoever temptations may be offered, or whatsoever falls she may receive from the devil, I hold in fine, for certain, that our Lord will draw her at length out of the storm into the port of salvation, as now by all appearance he had drawn me; and I humbly beseech his divine Majesty that I may never return again to be lost.

" Wherefore whosoever hath begun to exercise himself in mental prayer, I wish him not to give it over, whatsoever sins he may commit in the mean time, since this is the means by which he may recover himself again, which he will find to be of much more difficulty without it. And let not the devil tempt him to leave it, as he did me, upon a pretence of humility; but let him firmly believe, that if we will repent ourselves in good earnest, and resolve to offend the divine Majesty no more, he will restore us to the same friendship which we had before with him, and do us the same favours which he did us before; and sometimes even greater, if the repentance deserve it. And whosoever hath not yet begun this exercise, I beseech him, for the love of our Lord, not to deprive himself any longer of so great a benefit. There is nothing to be feared here, but much to be desired. For though a person should not proceed so far as to arrive at such favours, which God is wont to give to such as are perfect; yet, the least which he shall get will be, that he shall proceed in understanding the way to heaven. And I trust in the mercy of God, that no body ever made a choice of him for a friend, whom he

he did not well requite for his pains, if he persevered. For mental prayer is no other thing, in my opinion, than a treaty about making friendship with God; and a frequent and private communication with him by whom we know we are beloved. And as for your part, if you love him not as yet, (for friendship must be reciprocal) considering how much it imports you to hold friendship with him, and how much he loves you, you must force yourself to be much in his company, by the means of prayer; and so pass on through this gate, till you arrive at his love.

"For my part I cannot possibly understand why men should fear as they do, to begin to use mental prayer; nor of what it is, in fine, that they are afraid. The devil indeed sets himself to do us a real mischief, when, by I know not what fears, he seeks to make me forbear the considering how much I owe him; that there is a hell and a heaven, for eternity, and that all things of this world suddenly vanish away, or the thinking on those great afflictions and pains which our Lord endured for me. This was my prayer whilst I continued in all those dangers; and thus did I meditate, whensoever I was able. Now, therefore, since our Lord did suffer, and endure so wicked a creature as myself so long a time; and it appears plainly that all my miseries were redressed by this means, (of mental prayer) what person, how wicked soever, can find any thing to be afraid of? For how wicked soever any other person may have been, yet he will never have been so bad as I was, after receiving such great favours from our Lord as I had received. And who can ever come to doubt in his divine Majesty, since he had patience with me so long, upon this only reason, because I desired and procured some time and place in which he might be with me? And even this little

tle I often did, without any inclination of my own, but only by the great violence which either I offered to myself, or else was offered to me by our Lord. Since therefore, the use of mental prayer is so proper, yea and so very necessary, even for such as do not serve God as yet, but offend him; and since no body can in reality find any such hurt, that it can possibly do, as would not be much greater without it, how can such at least forbear to frequent this exercise as do begin to serve God, and desire to serve him?

" But above all things, I humbly desire (of them that are willing to exercise themselves in mental prayer) by the great love with which our Lord seeks to draw us to himself, that they will keep themselves carefully out of the occasions of sin; for when we are engaged in them, weak as we are, and exposed to, and assaulted by so many enemies, there can be no security. I would fain be able here to make a draught of that capacity in which my soul was in those days, (whilst I was exposed to those occasions) for I well understood myself to be in slavery, and yet I could not tell very well to what I was a slave; nor could I entirely believe, that what my confessor thought fit to make so slight of, was so very ill, as yet I found it. When they observed me to have good desires, and to follow the exercise of prayer, they thought I did a great deal; but my soul understood well enough that this was not performing all that I was obliged to do for one to whom I owed so very much. I humbly begged of our Lord, that He would help me; but I believe (by what I can now conjecture) that I was wanting in not placing all my confidence in his divine Majesty, and totally distrusting in myself. I sought for remedy, and I used many diligences; but I understood not that all is good for nothing, unless first we strip ourselves entirely

of

of all confidence in ourselves, and lodge it all in God. I desired to live a true life, for then I perceived well enough, that indeed I did not live, but was fighting with the shadow of death. And there was no body to give me life; and, as for me, I was not able to take it; and he who alone was able to give it, had no reason to afford me this grace, since he had so very often brought me back to himself, and I had still forsaken him again."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IX.

By what means our Lord began to awaken her soul; her fervent prayer before a devout picture of our Saviour; her reading St. Augustine's Confessions; and the effect they produced.

BUT now my soul was grown to be very weary; and yet the ill habits which I had gotten, would not permit her, though she desired it, to take any repose. It happened to me one day when I went into the oratory to see a picture which had been brought in thither to be kept, of Christ our Lord, all full of wounds; and it was so devoutly made, that when I looked upon it, it moved me very much; for it represented exceeding well what he had endured for us. And the sense of the little gratitude which I had shewed to our Lord for all those wounds of his, was such, that methought my very heart did even split. I cast myself down near the picture, pouring out a great shower of tears, and humbly and earnestly beseeching our Lord, that he would strengthen me so far, once for all, as that, at length, I might offend him no more.

" I was likewise very much devoted to the glorious St. Mary Magdalen, and I thought much and often of her conversion, and especially whensoever I received the blessed sacrament. For, knowing that at that time our Lord was most certainly in my very bosom, I placed myself at his feet, as conceiving that my tears would not be despised by him. I know not very well what then I said to him, but yet I know that he, who was pleased that I should shed those tears, did shew me favour enough

enough for his part, since I forgot the sense and tenderness of them so soon after. At these times also I recommended myself to that glorious Saint, that she might help me to obtain the pardon of my sins. But I conceive that I profited more on this last occasion, when I prayed before the picture, because I was then grown to have a very great distrust of myself, and to place all my confidence in God. To my thinking, I told him then, that I would never rise from that place, till he granted me the humble petition I had made; and I am fully persuaded it did me great good, for I have gone on improving much, ever since that time.

"Now I continued to follow this manner of prayer. I endeavoured always to represent Christ as within me, and I ever found it to prove better with me, in my opinion, when I conceived myself to find him all alone: for he being alone and so much afflicted, methought he was to admit me, as a person that was in necessity and misery. Of this kind of simplicities I had many; and in particular I used to find myself especially well in the *prayer* of the *garden*, and I delighted to accompany him there. I thought also much upon that bloody sweat, together with the great affliction he then sustained, and I desired to wipe off that most painful sweat from his face; but I remember how, in fine, I never durst resolve to presume to do it, so grievously did my sins represent themselves to me. Howsoever I remained there by him, as well as my thoughts would give me leave; but the truth is, I had store of such thoughts as tormented me, most nights, during many years, when I went to rest, and was recommending myself to God, before I fell asleep, I ever thought a little upon this passage of the prayer in the garden, and that even before I was a religious woman; for I had been told that I might gain

many indulgences by this practice, and at least I am of an opinion, that my soul gained much by this means, because thus I began to use mental prayer, even without expressly knowing what it was; and then it was as usual for me not to omit this custom, as not to fail of blessing myself with the sign of the cross, before sleep.

"About the same time, the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine were put into my hands; and it seems our Lord did so ordain it, for neither did I procure them, nor had I ever seen them before. I bore a very great affection to this saint, because the monastery, where I lived a secular, was of his order, and besides in regard that he had been a sinner; for I always found particular comfort in those Saints, who after having been sinners, were converted to our Lord, as conceiving that I should have help by their means, and that our Lord might be also induced to forgive me, as he had done them: save only, that I was discouraged with this consideration, that our Lord called them but once, and they returned, not to fall from him any more: but as for me, I had fallen so often, that it afflicted me to the very heart. But yet still, when I considered the love he bore me, I grew to be encouraged again; for I never was distrustful of his mercy, though I doubted of myself very often.

"O my God, how doth that obstinate stiffness of mine amaze me, whilst my soul continued for so long a time to receive so many helps at thy hand, and all in vain! And it strikes me with much fear, to consider how little I was able to gain upon myself all that while, and how I remained still bound up from resolving to give myself wholly to thee. But when I once began to read the said *Confessions*, methought that case, which had been his, was now directly my own, and I recommended myself much to that glorious Saint. And when I came

afterwards

afterwards to his *Conversion*, and read how he heard that voice in the garden, it was, to my thinking, as if our Lord had made it to be uttered for me, so lively was that sense which I had thereof in my heart; and I was for a great while even dissolved, as it were, in tears, and felt a very great affliction and anguish. Good God! how much doth a soul suffer, and what torments doth she endure, after the losing of her liberty, (by her being thus enslaved to sinful habits) whereas she was created and ordained to be the lady of herself, and to command? For my part, I wonder how I could be able to endure so great a torment. But blessed be God, who gave me life till I might get out of that so deadly a death. Methought my soul (on this occasion) obtained great strength from the divine Majesty, and that he ought now to hear my cries, and to have compassion of my so many tears.

" Upon this, my affection to spend more time with him began to increase, and to withdraw myself withal out of the way of evil occasions; for when they once were removed, I began to love his Divine Majesty, at least I thought I understood myself then to love him; but the truth is, I understood not, as I ought to have understood, in what the true love of God did consist. To the best that I am able to judge, I did even scarce make an end of disposing myself finally to resolve to serve him, when his divine Majesty began already to vouchsafe me (new and extraordinary) favours. And it seems that what others endeavour to get with much labour, our Lord was fain to find means to make me content to accept of: viz. in these latter years, to delight and regale me with his heavenly sweetness in great abundance. I never presumed to desire that he would give me so much as any tenderness of devotion; but I only

begged

begged that he would give me grace that I might not offend him, and would allow me pardon for my sins already committed: but seeing how great these were, I never durst deliberately desire any spiritual delights at his hands, for I thought he shewed me mercy enough, to suffer me to appear before him in mental prayer, and to draw me to his presence, considering how well I knew that if himself had not drawn me, I should never have come. Only once in my whole life, I remember, that being in great dryness of devotion, I desired him to afford me some little spiritual comfort; but as soon as I reflected upon what I had done, I remained so full of confusion for it, that the grief I had to see myself with so little humility, obtained for me that which I had presumed to beg.

"I was not ignorant that it was no unlawful thing to desire it, but I conceived this to be true with regard to such persons as are properly disposed to receive it, by having laboured before, with all their power, to procure that *true devotion* which consists in not offending God, and in being fully bent upon doing all that is pleasing to me. And, as for me, I thought those tears of mine were but faint and womanish tears, and without any force, since I obtained not that by them which I desired; though yet, upon the whole matter, I also believe that they were useful to me, as I have said. For in particular, after these two several times of that very great compunction and sorrow of heart which I felt, I began to give myself more to mental prayer, and to interest myself less in such things as might do me hurt; though yet I did not utterly give them over, but God, as I was saying, went on helping me to withdraw myself out of those dangers.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER X.

The extraordinary favours our Lord began to do her in prayer. Her fears thereupon. She makes a general confession to a father of the society of Jesus.

"From henceforward," says the saint, giving an account of herself, by orders of her ghostly fathers and other superiors, (C. xiii.) "this will be another new book, I mean another new life; for hitherto it was mine, but the life which I have lived since, is that which God hath lived in me, forasmuch as I can conceive; since I hold it to have been impossible otherwise for me to have given over such evil ways, customs and actions, in so short a time. Let our Lord be everlastingly praised for delivering me in such sort from myself.

"I, beginning now to free my soul from the occasions of evil, and to give myself more to mental prayer, our Lord began also to do me favours; as one who, in all appearance, desired no more than that I would be content to receive. I enjoyed sometimes," says she, (C. x.) "some beginnings of that which I shall now declare; though it used, at first, to pass away very quickly. It fell out, in the representation which I usually made in my prayer, by placing myself near to Christ, yea and sometimes also when I was reading, that there would come suddenly upon me, without either any expectation of it, or any preparation on my part, such an evident feeling of the presence of God, as that I could by no means doubt, but that either he was within me, or else I all engulphed in him. This was not in the manner of a *vision*, but I think they call it *mystical Theology*,* and it suspends the soul in such sort, that she seems to

* What she calls her Mystical Theology is the same with that which elsewhere she names the prayer of quiet and contemplation.

be wholly out of herself. The will is here in the act of loving; the memory seems to me to be in a manner lost, the understanding, in my opinion, discourses not (in the way of reasoning or meditating) although it be not lost, but remains as it were amazed, in *contemplation and admiration of that incomprehensible object* which the divine Majesty sets before it. Before this time I used to find most frequently a certain tenderness of devotion, or sweetness, which, I think, may in some part be procured; and it is a delight in the soul, which is neither wholly sensual nor wholly spiritual, but it is wholly the gift and blessing of God. But it seems that we may concur towards the obtaining it for ourselves by considering our own baseness and our ingratitude towards God, how much he has done for us, his passion and grievous torments (which he endured for the love of us), and his whole life so full of afflictions; as also by delighting ourselves in beholding his works, and thinking on his greatness, and remembering how he loves us," *&c.* For such considerations as these, may help to enkindle the love of God in the soul, and fill the heart with a tenderness of devotion, and bring forth an abundance of tears: now all this is a great gift, and high favour of God, which the soul ought to value very much: though this we may, as has been said, procure in some part, of ourselves, presupposing still the help of God's grace, without which we can do nothing at all, whereas, in that other kind of prayer (of *mystical theology*), the soul can do neither more nor less for the obtaining it, but it is wholly supernatural.

And here the saint declares, how much it imports us to understand the greatness of the favours which our Lord does us, that so we may be thankful for them, and more fervent in his divine love and service, ever remembering

bering whose gifts they are, and ascribing nothing at all to ourselves, but returning all to him. But then with regard to herself, she desires of her confessor (father Garzia de Toledo) to whom she addresses this book of her life, (written at his command) to keep to himself, under the seal of an inviolable secrecy, all that she shall now relate concerning those extraordinary favours which his divine Majesty was pleased to bestow upon her. "I humbly beseech him," says she, "to whom I send this, even for the love of our blessed Lord, that whatsoever I have said hitherto concerning my wicked life and my sins, he will publish it: and from this instant I give leave both to him and to all them who have been my ghostly fathers, to do it, even now whilst I am living, to the end that even now I may deceive the world no longer; which else perhaps may think there is some good thing in me: and really, really, I speak truth, to the best that I can now understand of myself, he shall give me great comfort if he will do it. But as for that which shall follow hereafter in this discourse, I allow him no such liberty at all; nor will I by any means consent that, if he should chance to shew this writing to any one, he should declare who the person is with whom these writings passed, nor who it was that wrote it: and for this reason I have forbore to name either myself or any other who hath intervened in this story, but have done the best I could to write it in such manner as that I may not be known: and I desire for the love of our Lord that I may ever remain secret. And because I hope you will do that which I say, (and I humbly beg it of you, even for the love of our Lord, and of those others also who are to see it) I write as you see, with all liberty and clearness, for otherwise I should have great scruple to do it, only as far as relates to the mere declaration of my sins, in which I

have none at all. As for other things, it is enough that I am a woman to make my wings fall down; how much more then, since I am not only a woman, but a wicked one too. And therefore, whatsoever your reverence shall find here beyond the bare relation of the course of my life, you must take to be only written for yourself, since you would needs importune me so far as to make you some declaration of the favours which our Lord is pleased to do me in prayer: provided ever that you find these things conformable to the catholic faith, for if not, you are instantly to burn what I have written," &c.

And here the holy mother interrupts the history of her life with twelve chapters relating to mental prayer, and the four different degrees of it, of which she treats at large from her own experience. The first is *meditation*, in the ordinary way, by considerations, affections, &c. which she compares to the labour of watering a garden, by drawing up water out of a well. The second is, what she calls the * prayer of *Quiet* or *Recollection*, which

* This prayer of *Quiet*, as the Saint herself in other places has explained it, is a certain *recollection* of the soul, drawn as it were into her own interior, and shut up within herself, so as to be enabled to sequester herself from all exterior tumults, and to stop up the avenues of the senses and imagination, by which they seek to press in upon her; and by this means to converse in such manner with God, as to be *perfectly alone* with him, and wholly employed on him by contemplation and love. "From this recollection," says she, "arises sometimes a certain *repose*, and an internal peace, which is very delicious; for the soul is then in such a condition, that it seems to her that, for the time it lasts, she wants nothing, and even speaking itself is then troublesome to her, for she would willingly do nothing but love: but this commonly lasts but for a little while, though sometimes longer." See *Relation touching the manner of her prayer*, vol. i. p. 309.

This prayer of *Quiet* has no manner of affinity with the system of the *false Mystics*, whom some call *Quietists*, not from this kind of prayer (unless perhaps from the abuse of it), but from their placing the perfection of an internal life in such a kind of an habitual quiet as excludes all *acts*, even of faith in our Lord Jesus, of hope, love and contrition, with all manner of desires and petitions in prayer,

which begins to be supernatural, and is what she spoke of above, under the name of *mystical Theology*. The third she calls the prayer of *Union*, which is still more sublime, and brings the soul nearer to God. The fourth and last consists in a more perfect union of all the powers of the soul, lost, as it were, and absorpt in God, and is often accompanied with *Extasies*, or *Raptures* of spirit, in which the soul seems to herself to be caught up to heaven, and admitted to see some part of the secrets of that blessed abode. She declares also the great effects which these supernatural degrees of prayer usually leave behind them in the soul: but advises, nevertheless, that such as desire to give themselves up to mental prayer, should not aim at raising up their spirit to these high things, except our Lord himself raises them up, and assures them that there is no securer way, even to the highest contemplation, than the devotion to the humanity of our Lord, and diligently meditating on the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Then, taking up the thread of the history of her life, the saint informs us, how after her beginning to withdraw herself from the occasions of distractions and temptations, the favours of God flowed in upon her more and more; and that his Divine Majesty did then very ordinarily give her the *prayer* of *quiet*, and many times also that of *union*, which lasted a long time. But now, as these heavenly visitations grew more frequent, and also more sublime; and as she found very evidently that these things were supernatural, and such as she could not procure when she would, nor yet avoid when they came: and, at the same time, through her humility, apprehended herself to be so great a sinner, that it could not

prayer, all reflections, *&c.* and introduces an indifference in regard to all things, even one's own salvation. Now all this is justly condemned by the church of God.

not be imagined that such extraordinary graces and familiarities of his Divine Majesty, could be compatible with so much unworthiness; she began to be in very great fears, lest she should be imposed upon by the illusions of the enemy: the more because there had been discovered, about that same time, several impostures of women, who either seeking to deceive, or being themselves deceived by Satan, had pretended some such supernatural elevations. Now these fears of hers encreased as the favours encreased, so that she was often greatly discouraged and perplexed; being possessed with a strange terror lest they should be delusions of the devil; only at the very time of the enjoyment of these graces she seemed to be easy and secure. Thus her jealousy was further nourished and increased, partly by her own observing, that many persons, esteemed to be of extraordinary sanctity and much prayer, yet had no such divine communications; and partly by the inexperience also of her directors, to whom she first happened to apply herself after these fears; who being unacquainted with these extraordinary ways of the spirit, and also discerning in her still some remaining imperfections, apprehended, no less than she, the illusions of Satan, and by this means added to her frights. But let us now see what steps she began to take under these fears, and with what great advantage to her soul.

"When now I saw," says she, (chap. xxiii.) "that my fears went so far (for I still proceeded and advanced in prayer), I conceived that there was either some great good, or else some excessive mischief involved in it; for already I understood very well that what befel me was supernatural. Upon this I concluded that there would be no security for me, If I did not labour to have a great purity of conscience, and if I did not quit all occasions

occasions of evil, though it were but of venial sins. For if my exercise of prayer were indeed of the Spirit of God, then nothing but good could come of it; and if it should be from the Devil, yet he could do me little or no hurt, but rather must sit down with loss to himself, if I should procure to please God, and not to offend him at all. Having resolved upon this, and ever humbly praying to our Lord that he would assist, after holding this course for several days, I found that my soul had not yet strength enough, all alone, to go through with the attaining to so great a perfection; in regard to some affections I bore to certain things, which, howsoever they were not very ill of themselves, yet were sufficient to spoil all.

"They told me then of a certain priest in this city (Dr. Daza), who was a learned man, and whose virtue and good life our Lord began to discover to the world; and I procured, by the means of a holy gentleman dwelling in the same place, to acquaint myself with him. This gentleman (Francis de Salsedo) is a married man, yet leads a life so exemplary and virtuous, and is one of so great prayer and charity, that his perfection shines brightly in the eyes of all men, and with much reason, in regard of the great good which is come to many souls by his means. He is of great understanding and of a sweet nature; his conversation no way troublesome, but so agreeable and delightful, being also just and holy, that he pleaseth all such as treat with him. He orders all things for the great good of such souls as he converses with, and seems indeed to have no other endeavour or aim, than to do good to all them whom he finds any way capable thereof, and to give contentment to all. Now this holy and blessed man do

I esteem

I esteem to have, by his industry, laid the foundation for the salvation of my soul. I am confounded to think of his humility, in that he would be content to come to see me; for there were, as I conceive, almost forty years, in which he had exercised himself in mental prayer, and he led his life with all that perfection, which his state and condition seemed to permit. I procured, therefore, by his means, that the priest, who was his great friend, and withal so great a servant of God, might come and speak with me; for I intended to confess myself to him, and to have him for my director. Now that gentleman, having conducted him to me, that we might speak together; when I, not without an extreme confusion, to see myself in the presence of so holy a man, had given him some knowledge of my soul, and of the prayer which I used, (for he excused himself from taking my confession, alledging that he was very full of business, as indeed he was,) he began with a holy resolution to conduct me as a person that was grown up and strong, for such indeed in all reason I ought to have been, according to the manner of prayer, which he saw I practised, that I should no more offend God in the least degree. But when I found his resolution so strict, with regard to those little things, from which, as I said, I had not the courage immediately to depart, with so great perfection; and when I perceived that he meant to carry on the business of my soul, after such a manner, as if he would make an end thereof, as it were, all at once; I was much afflicted, for I saw that I had need of much more consideration and art to effect this. For the means which he prescribed, were proper for a soul more perfect than mine; for though I had proceeded very far, inasmuch as might concern the favours of God in my soul,

soul, yet for what concerned virtue and mortification, I was but in the very beginnings thereof.

"In the mean time I agreed with that devout lay gentleman of whom I spoke, that now and then he should visit me; and here I discerned his great humility, since he would be contented to converse with one so wicked as myself. He began, therefore, to visit me and to encourage me, and to tell me that I must not think to deliver myself from all my imperfections in one day, but that by little and little God would do it; and that himself had remained whole years in reforming some very light things, as not being able to finish the work sooner. O humility! how great blessings dost thou bestow on them with whom thou abidest? Yea and even on those others also, who do but approach to them that possess thee? This saint (for in my opinion I may with great reason give him this name), related certain particulars to me concerning himself, which through his humility seemed weaknesses to him, and which he spoke of for my remedy and redress; but these, considering his condition of life, imported neither fault nor imperfection, but as for mine, it was a very great one in me to be subject to them. Now all my help consisted in this man's finding out the right way to cure me, and in his exercising so much humility and charity in hearing me, yea and patience also, when he perceived that I did not immediately and entirely amend myself. He went on with discretion, by little and little, and shewed me ways to overcome the devil. When he came to know my great imperfections, (and they might even be sins, though indeed after I had begun to treat with him, I was somewhat amended), and when I informed him also of the favours which God had been pleased to do me, (in prayer) that thereby he might give me more light; he told

told me that these things did not suit very well with one another, and that these extraordinary favours belonged to persons that were already very much advanced and mortified; that therefore, for his part, he could not forbear to be much afraid, because it seemed to him there appeared to be an evil spirit in some things, though he would not absolutely affirm it: he desired, therefore, I would consider very well, whatsoever I could understand concerning my prayer, and so relate it to him. Now here my great trouble was, that I could tell him nothing at all about my prayer; for indeed it is not long since God hath done me favour of knowing, neither how to understand it or declare it.

"As soon as he had thus expressed himself to me, the affliction I felt was great, and the tears I shed were many, through the fear I was in. For certainly I desired to please God, and I knew not how to persuade myself that these things were from the devil; only I feared lest from my great sins, our Lord might blind me so far, as not to be able to understand it. Turning over some books, to see if I could meet with any thing concerning my manner of *prayer*, I found in one what is called *the ascent of the mountain*, (in that particular which relates to the *union* of a soul with God) all those signs which I had experienced; as, namely, that I could not think when I had that *prayer*, for this was what I spoke most of; and I marked those places with certain lines, and then delivered him the book, to the end that both himself and that holy priest and servant of God, of whom I spoke before, might consider it, and let me know what I was to do: and whether perhaps they might be of opinion, that I had better give over mental prayer altogether. For in fine, to what purpose was I to thrust myself into those dangers, if now, after I had used this

this way of prayer for almost twenty years together, I had made no benefit thereof, but only incurred the deceits of the devil? and that therefore it were better for me not to use this prayer at all: though this seemed also a hard case to me, since already I had found by experience how ill it went with my soul, when I interrupted the exercise of prayer. So that now I could see nothing but misery on all sides, like one that is cast into a river, who, which way soever he turns, still fears more danger, and so is on the very point as it were of drowning.

"When therefore I had delivered this book, and made a relation of my life and of my sins, the best I could (though in gross, for I did not, in the way of confession, in regard he was a secular person, though yet still I made him understand how wicked I was,) those two servants of God considered with great charity, what might be best for me to do. Now the answer being resolved on, which I expected with fear enough, and I having recommended myself at that time to many persons, that they might pray for me to God; and myself also having been much in prayer, the gentleman with great grief came to me at length, and told me, that in the opinion of them both, it was the devil; and that the thing which would be most fit for me to do, was to treat about this business with a certain father of the Society of Jesus (then lately instituted by St. Ignatius), whom if I sent to, and declared that I was in need of his help, he would not fail to come; and that I should give him an account of my whole life by making a *general confession*, as also otherwise of all that related to the state of my soul; and that I must proceed in all things with much clearness, and that then, in virtue of the sacrament of *confession*, God would give him more light wherewith to direct me; and that these fathers were men of great experience in matters of spirit, but that I must

must be very careful not to swerve in the least from what he said, for that I should be in great danger if I had not one to govern and direct my soul.

"As for me, he put me now in so great a fear and pain, that I knew not what to do with myself, and I did nothing but weep. And being one day very much afflicted, in an oratory, I fell on reading a certain book, which it seems our Lord brought to my hands, where St. Paul was cited, saying that *God is* very *faithful*, and that *he never suffers them that love him, to be tempted above their strength*, or to be deluded by the devil. This comforted me very much, and I began to consider about making my general confession, and to put down in writing all the evil and the good I had done, in the whole course of my life, the most clearly that I could, without leaving out the mention of any little thing. And I remember that when I read over what I had written, and saw so many evil things committed by me, and no good done, it gave me an extreme affliction and sorrow. It also put me to some trouble, that they of the house should see me treat and converse with such holy people as they of the *Society of Jesus* are; for I was afraid of my own wickedness, and I thought I should be more obliged by this to give over my entertainments and pastimes, so that I engaged both the Sacristine and the Portresse not to speak of it to any one. But this availed me little, for there chanced to be one at the gate when I was called, who published it over all the convent.

"Now when I was treating with that servant of his Divine Majesty (who was greatly so indeed, and withal a very discreet person) about the passages of my whole life, and of my soul, he declared to me what every thing was, as a man that understood that language very well; and he encouraged me much, and told me that it was evidently

evidently the spirit of God which wrought in me: but that I must return again to the exercise of mental prayer, because I was not well grounded, nor had begun to understand mortification, and this was very true, (for I hardly understood so much as the name,) that I should by no means give over my prayer, but rather animate myself very much, and force myself to follow it on, since God had done me such particular favours therein; and who knew whether it might not please our Lord to do good to many by my means, *&c.* and that I should be very much to blame, if I corresponded not with those favours which our Lord had vouchsafed to shew me. In all things it seemed to me, that the Holy Ghost spoke to me by this father, in order to the cure of my soul; so strongly was every thing that he said imprinted therein. He put me to great confusion, and directed me by such means to proceed, that he seemed to make me quite another creature. He desired me to meditate every day upon some passage of the passion of our Lord, and to help myself thereby; and that I should only think on his sacred humanity, and that I should resist those (extraordinary) recollections and gusts as much as I could, and not give way to them, till he should express himself to me by some other order. He left me both comforted and strengthened, and our Lord assisted both me and him, to the end that he might understand my case and condition, and direct me in what manner I was to govern myself; and I remained with a resolution not to swerve at all from any thing which he should command me. And now my soul began to receive an evident improvement, as I shall here declare."

Thus the fears of the saint were allayed for the present, till new and higher favours gave occasion to new and greater apprehensions and perplexities.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XI.

The progress she makes after her general confession. Her conference with St. Francis Borgia. Our Lord speaks to her interiourly: the efficacy of these divine words. She bids defiance to all the devils.

"MY soul," says the saint, (Chap. xxiv.) "became so tractable, by means of this last confession of mine, that I thought there could be nothing, to which I was not willing to dispose myself: and so I presently began to make a change in many things: though yet my ghostly father did not urge me, but rather seemed to make but little account of all. And this wrought even so much the more upon me: for he carried me on rather by the way of the love of God; and as one that allowed liberty; and did not press much, unless I voluntarily offered myself out of love. Thus I continued almost two months, using all the diligence that possibly I could to resist the regales and favours of God. In the mean time, as to my exteriour conversation and proceeding, there was an apparent change to be seen in me; for already our Lord began to give me the courage to do certain things, which they, who saw, and knew me, held to be extraordinary; and indeed in respect of what I was wont to do before, they might be accounted so; yet still all fell short of that, to which I was obliged, both by the habit I wore, and by the profession I had made. From my resisting the favours of God, I learnt thus much, of his divine Majesty, that whereas before, it seemed to me, that for the disposing myself towards the receiving any such visits as those, there was need

need to retire, and to shut myself up into corners; so that I even durst not, as it were, move or stir on those occasions: I now quickly found how little all that served to the purpose: for when I loboured to turn away from them the most, our Lord overwhelmed me the most with them, and covered me all over with that suavity and glory, as seemed even to compass me in, on every side; in such manner as that it was not possible for me to escape from it. And really so it was, that I took so much care to decline it, that it even put me to pain; and our Lord still took more care, to do me favours, and to express himself in that way (in those two months) much more than he had formerly done; to the end that I might better know, that it was now no longer in my power to resist.

"And now I began anew to bear a great love to the most sacred humanity of our Lord: and my prayer began to settle itself, like a well founded building. I began also to be more inclined to the doing of penance; wherein I was slack before by reason of my so great infirmities. For that holy man, to whom I made my confessions, told me that some kinds of penance, which he named, would do me no hurt; and that perhaps God sent me so much sickness, because I imposed no penance on myself, and therefore his Majesty would impose some. He prescribed to me also certain acts of mortification, which were not very pleasing to me: but I went through with them all; because it seemed to me as if our Lord himself had commanded them: and his Divine Majesty gave him also the grace to enjoin them in such a manner, as that I should willingly obey him. My soul grew then greatly sensible of every offence, which I might commit against God, how light or small soever the same might be; in such sort, that if I did but

wear

wear any superfluous thing about me, I was not able to recollect myself in prayer, till I had put it off.

" At this time, came to this place father Francis Borgia, who had been duke of Gandia, and who some years before had left all, and entered into the society of Jesus. My ghostly father, and the gentleman, of whom I spoke before, procured that he should come to me, to the end that I might speak with him, and give him an account of my prayer: knowing that the said father was a person far advanced in that way, and much favoured, and regaled by God, as one who had left much for him; and therefore he rewarded him for it, even in this life. When he had heard me, he told me, it was the spirit of God: and that he was of opinion, that now it was not fit to resist it any longer; though yet till then, he thought it to have been well done. But that I should always begin my prayer with some passage of the passion; and if afterwards our Lord was pleased to elevate my spirit, I should not resist him; but suffer his Divine Majesty to exalt it; provided that I myself should not have any hand in procuring it. He as being a man, who had travelled far in that way, gave me both physick and counsel: for experience is a great matter in these affairs: and he said it would be an error to resist so any longer. I remained greatly comforted with this, and so did the lay gentleman; and he rejoiced much to hear him say, that it was of God: and he always advised, and assisted me, in all he could, which was very much.

" About this time, they removed my ghostly father to another place; which I resented extremely: for I thought I should now turn wicked again; and I imagined it would not be possible to find another like him. My soul remained as it were in a desert, full of desolation

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and fears: nor did I know what to do with myself. A certain kinswoman of mine obtained leave to take me along with her to her house, and I was the more willing to go, that so I might get another confessor of the society of Jesus. Our Lord was also pleased, that I should at this time make friendship with a certain lady, a widow; who was a person both of great quality, and much prayer, and conversed much with the fathers of the said society. She brought me also to confess to her confessor; and I remained a good while in her house. This father began to engage me to enter upon ways of more perfection. He told me that for the entire contenting and pleasing God, there was nothing to be left undone. But this he said, with a great deal of prudence and sweetness: for my soul was as yet far from being strong; but was rather very green and tender; especially with regard to the quitting certain friendships, which I maintained at that time: for though I offended not God thereby, yet the affection I bore them was so great; and I held it to be a kind of ingratitude to give them over. And so I also told him, that since God was not offended by it, why should I be ungrateful? He said, I should do well to recommend it to God for some days; and to recite the hymn *Veni creator Spiritus*, that he might give me light, to do what was best. Having therefore been a long time in prayer, in which I humbly besought our Lord, that he would assist me to please him in all things; I began the hymn; and whilst I was saying it, there came a rapture upon me, so sudden, that it took me, as it were, out of myself: and of this I could not doubt; for it was very evident; and it was the very first time, that our Lord favoured me with any rapture: and then I heard these words: *I will not have thee hold conversation with men,*

but with Angels. This caused in me a great amazement; for the commotion of the soul was great; and those words were spoken to me, in the most interiour part of the spirit; so that they made me afraid: though yet on the other hand, they gave me also great consolation; which after the flight of that fear, (caused by that strange novelty) still remained with me.

"This speech of our Lord hath been very well accomplished: for never have I from that time been able any more to establish friendship at all, or to find comfort with, or to entertain any particular love towards any, but such as I understand to love God, and to endeavour to serve him. Nor serves it at all to the purpose, whether any one of them be a kin to me, or otherwise a friend, or not; if I understand not that he is a servant of God, or a person addicted to prayer, it is a heavy cross to me to converse with any one. And this is certainly true, to the uttermost of what I can judge of myself. From that day forward, I have remained full of courage and resolution to leave all for God; as though he had been pleased in that very moment (for it seemed to be no more than a moment) to make this his handmaid become wholly another creature. So that now there was no longer need, that they should command me in that particular any more: for when my ghostly father saw me so fixed upon that custom, he had not as yet ventured to order me expressly to give it over: for he did without all doubt expect that our Lord should effect it himself; as indeed he did. Nor could I myself ever imagine, it would have come to this: because I had already used some endeavours that way, and the affliction it caused in me was so great that I gave it over; as being a thing which I held not to be inconvenient. But now here our Lord imparted both liberty and strength to me,

to

to put it in execution. So I told this to my ghostly father; and I gave over that friendship, and it did them, with whom I conversed, no little good to see this resolution in me. God be ever blessed and praised, who gave me that liberty and power in one moment, which I had not been able to procure and obtain of myself, by all those great diligences, which I had used for many years to this end, though I often used so much violence, as cost me a good part of my health. But now this having been wrought for me, and granted by him, who is the omnipotent, and the true Lord of all, it put me not to the least pain or trouble.

And here the holy mother (chap. xxv.) takes occasion to treat at large of this kind of interior speeches, of which henceforward she had frequent experience. And she shews how these that come from God, may be distinguished from the productions of one's own imagination, and from the operation of Satan, especially by the great majesty, power and authority which they carry with them, together with an evidence of their truth deeply imprinted in the soul, and ever verified by the event of all such things as are thereby foretold; as also by their efficacy in the sudden change and wonderful fruits they produce in the soul: so that when indeed they come from God, they are *works* rather than *words*, whereas the productions of our own imagination have no good effect at all, and such speeches as proceed from the devil, have always a bad one.

She adds that "she holds it for certain, that God will never permit the devil to deceive any soul, which puts no confidence at all in herself, and is fortified in the faith, and determined for her part to die a thousand deaths for the least article thereof; and who, by this lively and strong faith, procures always to walk in con-

formity to that which is held by the church, and is so strongly settled in these truths, that all the imaginable revelations in the world, no not, if she should see the very heavens open themselves, could make her vary in the least point from the doctrine of the church. But if she once come to be shaken, or to waver, even in a thought, against this faith, or to entertain herself so far as to say, *if God saith this to me, this may also be as true as that which he said heretofore to the saints*, one may presently see that this is stark nought. But for my part, I believe, that even the first motions of this will hardly set upon such a soul, as is already so strong, as our blessed Lord is wont to make them to whom he imparts these favours. For such a soul (mark her own dispositions) thinks she could tear those devils to pieces, for any one little truth which the church holds. I say, therefore, that if the soul do not find such a strength as this in herself, and if the devotion she feels, or the vision she sees, doth not assist and help her on therein, let her not hold any such vision for safe. For, to the uttermost of what I do discern and know by experience, the credit that any such thing is of the spirit of God, can only be assured by its being agreeable to Holy Scripture; and when it shall be found to vary from this rule, though never so little, I think I should be then much more sure without comparison, of its being from the devil, than now I am that it is of God. For in that case we should have no need at all to go in search after signs, nor to enquire of what spirit it were; since this (of its varying from the rule of faith) is so clear a sign, to make us believe that it is of the devil, that if all the world should endeavour to assure me that it was of God, I would not believe it."

For

For a further security from being imposed upon by any inward speeches or visions from the devil, the Saint here declares the effects which these operations of the enemy are apt to leave in the soul; and advises all such as experience any of these extraordinary things, ever to proceed with caution and fear, and to discover all that passes of this kind in their souls, to a learned director; for so they shall be sure to receive no hurt from the devil. Though for her part, she owns she had suffered greatly from the excessive fears, which some of those, to whom she communicated the affairs of her soul, were subject to; of which she gives the following instance.

"It happened to me once," says she, "that five or six persons (all great servants of God) meeting together, treated much among themselves about finding some remedy for me, and doubted that I might be deceived, and I myself was also, at that time, subject to extreme fears, whensoever I was not in prayer, (for when our Lord vouchsafed to do me any favour in prayer, I grew presently into good assurance) now my ghostly father* told me that they all concluded that it was the devil; and they advised that I should not communicate so often, and that I should endeavour to divert myself, in such sort as not to be much alone, &c. When I found what so many of them affirmed, and that yet I could by no means believe it, I grew extremely scrupulous, as conceiving that this was want of humility, since they all were incomparably of better life than I, and besides were all of them learned. I forced myself the best I could to think as they did; and I reflected much on my own wicked life, and how (considering my wickedness) what they affirmed might

* This was that holy man Father Baltassor Alvarez, Soc. J. who was the Saint's confessor for three years, during her greatest perplexities. His life is extant, written by Father Lewis de Ponte.

might be true enough. Being under this affliction, I went out of the church, and entered into a private oratory, having now, for many days, forborne to communicate, and avoided also being alone, (which before had been my whole comfort) and having not one person with whom I might treat, for they were all against me: only my ghostly father, though he conformed himself so far with those others, (as I understood afterwards) as to make trial of me, did ever give me comfort; and told me, that though it should be the devil, yet if I took care not to offend God, he would be able to do me no hurt; that at length he would leave me, and in the mean time that I should pray heartily to God; that his divine Majesty would be pleased to lead me some other way. Being therefore, on this occasion, all alone, without having any one by me, with whom to ease myself, I could neither pray nor read, but was like a person quite stupified, from that great tribulation which I then endured, without knowing what to do with myself, (for never to my thinking, have I seen myself in so great extremity as at that time,) and I remained four or five hours after this manner, so that there seemed to be no comfort at all for me, either upon earth, or yet from heaven, in the midst of the sufferings in which our Lord had left me, and under the fear also of a thousand dangers. But O my Lord! how true a friend art thou, and how powerful! What thou wilt, thou canst effect, and dost never forsake or cease to love them who love thee. Let all things praise thee, O thou Lord of the universe! And O that I could cry out loud enough through that whole universe, to declare how faithful thou art to thy friends! All other things fail us, but thou, who art the Lord of them all, dost never fail. And O how little is all that which thou permittest such as love thee, to suffer for thee.

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Let then all the learned men in the world rise up against me; let all creatures persecute me; let the devils of hell torment me; only be not thou wanting to me, O my Lord; for I know by good experience with how much advantage and fruit, thou deliverest all such as put their confidence in thee alone. For when I was in this great and miserable affliction of spirit (before I had begun to have any vision at all, these only words (of thine spoken in my interior) were sufficient to rid me in an instant of all trouble, and to quiet me entirely; *fear not daughter, for it is I, and I will not forsake thee; do not fear.* It seems to me, that considering what a creature I was then, there would have been need of a long time to persuade me to quiet myself, and that nobody would have been able to do it: and yet now behold me here quieted and composed by those few words, and endued with strength, with courage, and with security; together with a certain repose and light, in such sort as that, at that very instant, I saw my soul become a direct other thing than it was before. O what a good God! O what a good Lord is he, and how powerful! His words are works: and O how is our faith here strengthened, and our love increased! so that I often called to mind how our Lord, when a tempest had risen at sea, stilled (by his command) both the winds and the waves; and so also did I say, who is this, whom all the powers of my soul obey, and who, in an instant, brings in light to chace away so great an obscurity, and makes that heart grow soft and supple, which seemed before to have the hardness of stone; and knows how to give and draw down the water of sweet tears, where there was so great a drought so long before? Who is he that inspires these desires? Who imprints such a courage? What have I been thinking of, and what do I fear? What is this? I

desire

desire to serve this Lord, and I pretend no other thing than to please him: I renounce all contentment and ease, or any other good at all, save only the accomplishing of his will (for of this I seemed very sure): since then this Lord is so powerful as I see he is, and as I know he is, and that all the devils in hell are his slaves; I being a servant of this Lord and king, what hurt can they all do me? And why may not I have strength enough to fight with all the powers of hell?

"I then took a cross into my hand, and really I thought God gave me courage, that I was not afraid to encounter with the devils, but conceived that with that cross I should easily overcome them all; and thus I challenged them: *now come all of you, for I being the servant of the Lord, will see what you can do against me.* And it is most certain that I thought they were afraid of me; for I remained so quiet, and so fearless of them all, that even till this time, all the fears which I had formerly conceived, are entirely removed from me. For though I have seen them sometimes, (as I shall afterwards declare), yet I never feared them more, but conceived that they were rather afraid of me. I have a dominion over them, which hath been given me by the Lord of all creatures; so that I make no more reckoning of them than of so many flies. I would, it might please his divine Majesty that we might fear him, whom indeed we ought to fear; and that we might perfectly understand, that we shall receive more prejudice by committing any one single venial sin, than by all the power of hell put together, for this is certainly true. But when we by our disorderly affections to honours, riches, and pleasures, give them a hold of us, by loving and desiring that which we ought rather to abhor; then indeed they grow able to do us much hurt, for we enable

them

them to fight against ourselves, with the weapons which we put into their hands. I beseech his divine Majesty that this may never be my case, but that he may be pleased to do me such favour, as that I may understand that to be *ease* and *rest* which is indeed *true ease* and *true rest*, and that to be *honour*, which is *true honour*, and that to be pleasure which is *true pleasure*, and not the direct contrary to all this, and then a fig for all the devils in hell; for they shall be afraid of me, and utterly unable to do me hurt."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XII.

She receives fresh favours from God. Our Lord by an intellectual vision represents himself to her, in his sacred humanity. The account she gives of St. Peter of Alcantara.

"I ESTEEM," says the Saint, Chap. xxvi. "the courage which our Lord hath given me against the devils, to be one of the great favours, which it hath pleased his divine Majesty to confer upon me: because, for a soul to go cowardly on, and to be fearful of any thing, but only to offend God, is an extreme great inconvenience. For since we have a king, who is omnipotent, and so great a Lord, that he can do all that he pleases, and who brings all things into subjection under himself; there is no cause to fear at all; if we walk but sincerely, and with purity of conscience, in the presence of his divine Majesty. And in order to this, I shall be glad to have all the fears in the world, not to offend him, in any one instant of my whole life; who is able in the very same instant to destroy, and annihilate us all. But as long as his divine Majesty is pleased with us, there is none can stand against us. You will perhaps say, that this is very true; but then where shall we find that soul, which stands so upright, as to be wholly pleasing to him? And because she is not, she is in fear. Not mine, for certain, which indeed is very wretched and unprofitable, and overcharged with a thousand miseries. But God doth not proceed with such rigour as men do; for he knows our frailties: and the soul hath ways of understanding, and finding in herself, by great conjectures, whether really she loves his

his divine Majesty, or no: for in such as arrive once at this state, our love to him not a kind of covered, or disguised love, as in the beginnings; but it is accompanied with so great impulses and desires to see God (as I shall hereafter declare) that all things afflict; all things weary and tire, all things torment the soul; if she be not with God, or (doing or suffering) for God. There is no repose which doth not displease her, because she finds herself absent from her true repose. And so her love to God is very evident, and as I said, cannot be dissembled or concealed.

"It happened to me once, that I found myself in great tribulation; being under many detractions (by occasion of a certain business, of which I may speak hereafter) [viz. the foundation of her first monastery at Avila] from all that house, where I lived; yea and from all my Order; and also meeting with many afflicting accidents (from the opposition of the whole city, &c.) at which time it pleased our Lord, to utter these express words to me: *Of what art thou afraid? Dost thou not know, that I am omnipotent? I will accomplish all that which I have promised thee.* And indeed he accomplished it afterwards very well: but even then instantly there remained (after these words) such a kind of strength in me, that methought I could have presently put myself upon other greater things, though they should cost me much more trouble, for his service; and could have suffered also much more for him.

"And this very thing (of hearing those internal words, and experiencing their efficacy) hath happened to me so often, that I am not able to count the times: and our Lord hath made me, and continues still to make me such reprehensions, on occasion of those imperfections, which I sometimes commit, that they are able

able, as it were, to annihilate the soul; at least they bring with them her amendment. At other times he brings back to me the remembrance of the sins of my former life: and this he most ordinarily uses to do, whensoever he intends to bestow on me any extraordinary favour. And he doth it in such sort, that the soul discerns herself, as in the very day of the last universal Judgment: and the truth is represented to her, with such a kind of perspicuity and charity, that she knows not what to do with herself. At other times, he is pleased to inform me of certain dangers, with regard both to myself, and others, about things which have not happened, till three or four years after: but they all were ever fulfilled; and some of them also might be named, if there were cause. So that there are so many particulars, whereby it may be understood, that these things are of God, as that in my opinion they cannot but be acknowledged. The most secure proceeding is, as our Lord hath also told me many times, not to fail to impart my whole soul to my ghostly father; and that he be a learned man: and that I do entirely obey him. And this is the course which I take: and without this I could have no security; and there can be no hurt at all in this, but many advantages. Whensoever our Lord commanded me any thing in my prayer; if my ghostly father bid me do otherwise; our Lord would tell me to obey my ghostly father: and yet again afterwards his Divine Majesty would direct him to command me to do that very thing, which our Lord himself had commanded me before.

"When once they took away from me many books written in Spanish, I was much troubled at it; for some of them I was delighted with reading: and now I was not able to read any; for they had left me none, but such

such as were in Latin. Our Lord (on this occasion) said these words to me. *Be not troubled: for I will give thee a living book.* I could not, for my part, understand what this meant, for then I had never had any vision: but within a little time after, I understood it very well: for I have had so much to think of, and to recollect myself about, concerning those things, which I have seen presented to me; and our Lord hath shewed me so great love, in instructing me by such a multitude of ways, that I have had very little need of books, or rather in effect none at all: his Divine Majesty hath been that true book to me, wherein I have indeed seen *truths.* And blessed be such a book as this, which leaves imprinted in the heart, what we may read there; and in such manner as that it can never be forgotten. Who can see our Lord all covered over with wounds, and afflicted with persecutions and sufferings of all kinds, and not embrace them, and love and desire them? Who can see, though but a very little glimpse of that glory, which he gives to such as serve him, and not know that all we can possibly do, or suffer here, is nothing: since we hope and look for so high a reward? How can he, who sees something of the torments, which the damned endure in hell, choose but esteem all the sufferings of this life to be delights, in comparison of those others? And how can he choose but know the great obligation he hath to our Lord, for having delivered him so often from that place of eternal woe?

After this kind of digression, relating to these internal speeches, which she says, (Chap. xxv.) *are certain words very distinctly formed in* the soul, which though *not heard with the corporal ears, are understood much more expressly and clearly than if they were so heard;* nor is it in the power of the soul to forbear to understand them,

and

and to give her whole attention to them) the Saint returns to the discourse of her life, and shews how vain all the resistance was, that she made to these Divine favours, which still encreased, the more she resisted them. That when they debarred her from employing her hours as before in solitude, in mental prayer; instead of *prayer* our Lord gave her *recollection*, even when she was in conversation; and so as that she was not able to avoid it: and that he would be frequently speaking to her, in her interiour; she in the mean while being troubled, that she could not help hearing him. She adds (Chap. xxvii.) that in the mean time, and for the space of two whole years, many prayers were made to our Lord for her, and by her; and many devotions performed, to obtain of his Divine Majesty, that he would be pleased to conduct her soul by some other way, which might be more secure; since they told her that this way, she was in, was to be suspected. But though, as she says, 'she begged it much of God, and endeavoured much to desire another way; yet considering how evidently her soul was improved (by these favours) she could never find it in her power (except it were sometimes, when she was much distressed, and tired out, with the things which they said to her, and the frights, into which they put her) to desire it heartily; though still she asked for it. For now, says she, I was wholly grown to be another creature: and I could not but put myself into the hands of God; beseeching him that since he knew, what was fittest for me, he would be pleased to accomplish his holy will, in all things, concerning me. I saw plainly, that by this way my soul was carried up to heaven, which formerly was dropping down to hell: why therefore should I desire such a thing? And as for believing that it was of the devil, it was not

not in my power to constrain myself to it. Though yet I did what I could to desire the one, and to believe the other: but it was not, as I said, in my power. I offered to this end, some little poor good works, which I did if I did any. I became devoted to some Saints; that by their means I might be delivered from the devil. I performed the devotions of nine days. I recommended myself to St. Hilarion, and to St. Michael the archangel, for this purpose: and I importuned also many other saints, that our Lord might be pleased by their intercession, to conduct me in the way of truth; and after the end of two years, which both I, and other persons, had employed, with all their prayers and mine, in order to this end, that our Lord might either conduct my soul by some other way, or declare the truth (for now those *words* and *speeches* which I have spoken of, were grown very ordinary with me, and even continual) this happened to me, which I shall now relate.

"As I was in prayer one day (on the festivity of the glorious apostle St. Peter) I saw standing very near me, or to speak more properly, I felt, and perceived (for indeed I saw nothing at all, either with the eyes of my body, or of my mind) that Christ our Lord was close by me; and I found, that it was he, in my opinion, that spoke to me. I, who till that time had been extremely ignorant, that there could be any such vision as this, fell at the first into a mighty fear; and I could do nothing but weep: till presently, through his giving me assurance, by his speaking but one only word, I found myself, as I was wont, very quiet, with great delight, and without fear. It seemed to me, that Christ Jesus our Lord went always by my side: but the vision not being *imaginary*, or represented in any form to the imagination, I perceived not in what shape he was:

though

though as for his being always on my right side, I found, and felt it very clearly; and that he was the witness of whatsoever I did; and that if I were recollected, though never so little (or rather indeed unless I were very much distracted) I could not but understand that he was by me. I then went immediately to my ghostly father, being much grieved that I should be obliged to let him know it. He asked me what form, or figure he had, when I saw him? And I told him I had not seen him. Upon this he enquired, how I knew that it was Christ? To this I answered, that I knew no more, but that I could not forbear to understand, that he was close by me; and that I found and felt it plainly; and that the recollection of my soul, in the prayer of *Quiet*, was far greater, and more continual; and that the effects were very different from those others, which I had formerly found; and that the thing was (to me) very certain and evident. I brought divers comparisons, whereby to give myself to be understood: but yet in my opinion, there is none, which suits very well, to express this kind of vision. For as this is one of the highest kind, as I was told afterwards by father Peter of Alcantara, and other great learned men; and is one of those favours, where the devil can least intermeddle; so have we here no words, or terms whereby to declare it. (Our Lord's being present, is here represented to the soul, by a certain notice, which is even clearer than the sun. And yet no sun, or brightness, is seen, but only a certain light, which without our seeing it, illuminates and informs the understanding, to the end that the soul may enjoy so high a good.) And this brings great benefit with it, &c.

Now this is not such a presence of God, as many times is perceived; especially by such persons as are arrived

arrived at *Union*, or the prayer of *Quiet;* who when they begin to make that prayer, seem to find the person ready at hand, to whom to speak: and seem to understand that he hears them, by the effects, and the spiritual sentiments, which they find of great love and faith, and resolutions; accompanied with much tenderness of devotion: for though this be a great favour of God, and much to be esteemed; yet it is no *vision:* but only we understand that God is there, by the effects, which, as I have said, he works in the soul: for in this manner doth his divine Majesty vouchsafe to give himself, then, and there to be perceived. But here, (in the case in hand) it is clearly discerned, that Jesus Christ, the son of the Blessed Virgin is present. In that other manner of prayer, there are certain influences of the *divinity* represented; but here together with them, we find that the most sacred *humanity* also doth accompany us, to do us favours; and there is imprinted so clear a notice of his presence in the mind, without seeing him, that it seems a kind of impossibility to doubt it: for our Lord will have it so engraven in the understanding, that it can no more be questioned, than even that which we see; no nor yet so much, &c.

"This is a language, which hath so much of the *celestial* in it, that it cannot well be given to be understood, by us here, how much soever we may desire it, unless our Lord himself be pleased to teach it by experience. For our Lord here conveys, and places in the most interiour part of the soul, that which he is pleased the same soul should understand; and there doth he represent it, without either any image, or form of words; but only after the way of that kind of vision, which I have been speaking of. And now let this manner of God's making the soul understand what he will, and his

great truths, and mysteries, be much observed. For many times that which I understand from our Lord in any vision, his divine Majesty is pleased to represent it to me after this manner. The soul (on these occasions) remains so amazed, that some one such favour as this is sufficient to work a total change in her; and to make her love nothing, but him, who without any labour of hers, hath made her capable of so unspeakable blessings; and who communicates his secrets to her; and treats her with arguments of so great friendship and love, as endure not to be written. To me it seems, that our Lord is here pleased, that this soul of ours, should have some notice of that which passes in heaven: and that, as they do there understand one another, without speaking (the truth of which I never knew, till our Lord in his goodness made me see it, and shewed it me in a certain rapture or extasy) so also it should be here, that God and the soul should understand one another, because his divine Majesty is pleased that they shall do so, without any other artifice, to make the mutual love known, which these two dear friends bear to one another; by only looking upon one another. O admirable benignity of thine, O my God, who permittest thyself to be looked upon by those eyes, which have abused their sight so much as these of my soul have done! At least, O my Lord, let them now remain accustomed (after this sight of thee) to look no more upon inferiour and base objects; nor let any thing, out of thee, be able to please them. O great ingratitude of mortals! How far wilt thou extend? For I know by experience, that this is true which I am saying: that what is here said by me, is the least part of that favour, which thou impartest to any such soul, as thou vouchsafest to bring to such a state as this. O you

souls,

souls, which have begun to use mental prayer, and all you, who have true faith, what blessings can you seek, which may any way be compared to the least of those, which are obtained by the servants of God, even in this mortal life of ours; besides the happy eternity hereafter? Consider that even here, it is most true that God gives himself to such, as forsake all things else for the love of him. He is no accepter of persons; he loves all; nor hath any one an excuse, how wicked soever he may have been; since our Lord proceeded after this manner with me, and advanced me to such a condition. Consider also, that this, which I am saying now, is not so much as a cypher of that which may be said; but only so much is here delivered; as is necessary for making this manner of vision, and favour, which God is pleased to do to a soul, to be in some sort understood.

"But now it is in no power of mine, to declare that which she finds in herself, when our Lord is pleased to impart those secrets, and greatnesses of his to the soul: a delight so highly superior to all that can possibly be imagined here; that it doth, with great reason, make them who possess the same, abhor all the pleasures of the earth; which all put together, are no better comparatively than mere dung, and dirt; nay it is loathsome to bring these into comparison at all with those others; even though they might be enjoyed for ever. And yet of these celestial consolations, what kind of poor proportion is that which God is pleased to impart in this world: no more than, as it were, one single drop of water, to that great full-flowing river, which is prepared for us. It is a shame, and I apply it to myself; and if it were possible for souls to be ashamed in heaven, I should be justly ashamed there more than any other; that we should desire such great blessings,

and delights, and glory infinite, all at the cost of the good Jesus, and not weep at least over him, with the daughters of Jerusalem, if we will not help him to carry the cross, with Simon of Cyrene! O how can we ever think of coming to enjoy, by the way of pleasures and pastimes, that which he purchased for us with the expence of so much blood? This can never be. Or how can we think, by aspiring to our vain honour, to be able to remedy that contempt and scorn, which he endured for us, that we might reign for ever with him. This is unlikely. No, no, we take a wrong course quite; we shall never reach to our journey's end, by such an erroneous way. Your reverence must cry out aloud, to make these truths be heard; and since it hath pleased God to deprive me of this liberty, I would be always crying out to myself, that I came to hear and understand God so very late. O how rich will he find himself another day, who left all the riches he had for Christ? How full of honour, who rejected all wordly honour, and took pleasure in seeing himself much abused, and despised for the love of him? How wise will he see himself then, who rejoiced to see the world hold him for a fool; since they called wisdom itself by that name? But O how few such as these are there now left in the world, by reason of our great sins? Alas! it seems, that all they, are spent and gone long ago, whom the world was wont to esteem for fools, when they saw them perform those heroical acts of true lovers of Christ. O world! O world! how dost thou gain esteem, by having few that know thee!

"But O what an excellent example did God take lately from us, in the person of that blessed man Friar Peter of Alcantara? The world was now no longer able to endure such a perfection, as his; for now, they

say

say, the complexions of men are grown weaker; and that now we cannot live, as in former times. But that holy man lived in this time; and yet he had as fervent a spirit, as men had in the days of old, and trod the world no less under his feet. And indeed though one did not go barefoot, nor perform such sharp and strict penance as he did; yet are there many other ways, whereby we may tread the world under our feet; and our Lord will teach us these ways, when he finds a mind that is fit. And how great a one did God bestow upon this Saint, of whom I am now speaking, to enable him to continue for seven and forty years, a course of so sharp and rigorous penance, as his is generally known to have been. And I will say something of it, because I know it to be true.

"He told me, (because of the love that he bore me, and because our Lord would have it so, to the end that he might help me, and encourage me, in a certain time of great distress) how, to the best of my remembrance, he had slept, as he said, but one hour and a half, in the four and twenty hours, for forty years together: and that it was the greatest mortification, and the most troublesome penance, that he ever used, in those beginnings, to overcome himself in point of sleep: and that in order to this end he was always obliged to be either kneeling, or standing on his feet: only when he slept, he sat; and that with his head leaning aside upon a little piece of wood, fastened for that purpose in the wall. For as to the extending his body at length in his cell, it was not possible for him; for his cell, as it is known, was not above four foot and a half in length. In all these years he never put on his capouch or hood, how hot soever the sun, or how great soever the rain might be: nor did he ever wear any thing upon his feet:

feet: nor was his body clad, but only with a habit of thick coarse sackcloth, without any other thing next his skin; and this as straight as could be endured; with a short mantle of the same over it. He told me that when the weather was extreme cold, he was wont to put off his mantle, and to leave the door, and the little window of his cell open; that so, when afterwards he put his cloak on again, and shut his door, he might give his body so much refreshment by it, as that it might be quiet, with this additional warmth. It was an ordinary thing with him, not to eat till the third day, after he eat last: and a certain companion of his told me, that it sometimes happened to him, not to eat any thing at all for eight days: but that perhaps might be when he was in prayer: for he used to have great raptures, and vehement impulses of the love of God; of which I myself was an eye witness. His poverty was extreme; and so also was his mortification even from his youth. For he told me, that he had lived three years in a house of his Order, without knowing any of the religious, but only by their speech; and so whensoever he was of necessity, to go to any place, he could not tell how to do it, but by following the other religious. As for women, for the space of many years, he never looked upon any: he told me, that it was now all one with him, to see any body or not to see them. But when I came to know him he was very old, and his weakness so extreme, that he seemed not to be composed, but as of the roots of trees. With all this sanctity of his, he was very affable; but was wont to express himself in very few words, unless some question was asked him; and he was very agreeable in them; for he had an excellent understanding. I shall add no more, but only that he died as he lived; preaching and admonishing the religious of his order. When he saw

he

he was come to an end, he said the psalm *Lætatus sum in his*, &c. *I have rejoiced in these things, which have been said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord:* and so stooping down, and kneeling, he expired. Since that, our Lord hath been pleased to let me enjoy more of him now, than I did when he was alive; giving me counsel in divers occasions; and I have seen him many times in exceeding great glory. The first time that he appeared to me, he said: *O happy penance, which hath obtained so great a reward!* with many other things. A year before he died, he appeared to me, when we were at a distance from one another; and I understood that he was to die; and I advertised him of it. When he gave up the ghost, he appeared to me, and told me that he was going to rest. I did not then believe it; but yet I related it to some persons: and within eight days after, the news came to us that he was dead; or rather, to speak more properly, that he had then begun to live for ever. Behold here the severe penance of his life, ending in so great glory, that methinks he much more comforts me now, than when he was here. Our Lord told me once, that men should not ask any thing in his name, wherein he would not hear them: and myself have recommended many things to him, that he might beg them of our Lord; and I have always found them granted. The Lord be blessed for ever: Amen.

CHAPTER. XIII.

She is favoured with another kind of vision of our Lord, clearly represented to her inward eyes, with shape and form, and inconceivable beauty. The admirable effects of this vision.

"BUT now," says the Saint (Chap. xxviii.) "to return to what I was speaking of, I had that kind of vision aforesaid for some days, in a manner continually: and it was so beneficial to me, that I never went out of prayer; and besides whatsoever I then happened to do, I took care it should be done in such a manner as that it might not displease him, whom I evidently saw to be there as a witness of all that passed. But not long after being one day in prayer, it pleased our Lord to shew me his sacred *hands* [not by an intellectual vision only, as before, but with their form and shape presented before the eyes of the soul] and they had such an excess of beauty in them, as I am not able to express. But this sight gave me a very great fear; as indeed every novelty is wont to do, in the beginning of any of these supernatural favours, which our Lord is pleased to shew me. Within a few days after this, I saw also his divine *Face*; the sight of which methinks did leave me quite absorpt. For my part, I could not conceive, why our Lord shewed himself thus to me by little and little; since afterwards he resolved to do me the favour, that I should see him all; till I came to reflect that our Lord was pleased to conduct me according to my natural weakness: Let him be eternally blessed for it; since so great a glory as that, presented all together at once, and meeting with a subject so base,

and

and wretched as myself, could never have been endured; and therefore our merciful Lord, who knew this well, disposed of things in this manner. Your reverence may perhaps imagine that there was not need of so much strength and courage, for the beholding of hands and face so beautiful. But indeed bodies glorified have so very great a beauty, that the glory they bring along with them, when we behold a thing so supernatural and delightful, doth perfectly amaze and distract the soul; and so I was at first much disordered, and troubled with the fear it put me in, though afterwards I remained with certainty and security, and such other effects, as made my fear quickly vanish away.

" Upon a certain day (of St. Paul) whilst I was hearing mass, all this most sacred humanity of Christ was repretented to me, as it uses to be painted after the resurrection, but with so great beauty and majesty as I once declared to your reverence, when you commanded me so expressly to do it. And I remember that I was troubled enough at it, for it cannot be uttered without even annihilating one's self: but yet howsoever I did what you commanded me the best I could, and therefore I need not stand to repeat it particularly here; only I say, that if there were no other thing in heaven to delight our sight, but the excessive beauty of glorified bodies, that felicity would be immense, especially to behold the humanity of Jesus Christ our Lord, would be an exceeding great glory. For since the majesty thereof is discovered to be so great, whensoever it is represented to us here, according to that proportion of which our misery, in this mortal life of ours, is capable; what will it be then, when we shall entirely enjoy so high a good? This vision, (though represented to me by way of *image*), was never

never seen by me with the eyes of my body, nor indeed was any other, but only with the eyes of my soul. They who know these things better than I, affirm that the former vision (which was purely *intellectual*) is of a higher and more perfect kind than this; and that this also is much beyond those others, which are seen with these corporal eyes: for these latter, they say, are of the lowest kind of all, and that in which the devil can more easily introduce his illusions; though at that time I could not understand any such matter, but rather desired that when I was to receive any favour of this nature, it might be so, as that I might see it with my corporal eyes, to the end that my ghostly father might no longer tell me that I did but fancy things."

And here the Saint observes, how impossible it would have been for her fancy or imagination to have framed to itself any such image, as that which our Lord here presented to her. "For though" says she, "I should have employed many years in conceiving how I might be able to figure a thing of so extreme beauty, I should never have either the power or the wit to do it, for its clarity and brightness far exceeds all that can be imagined in this world. It is not a splendor which dazzles, but a delightful brightness, and a lustre infused, which affords an exceeding great pleasure to the sight, and is far from wearying it; nor doth that light offend, whereby we see this object of so divine beauty. This is a light so very different from all that of this world below, that even the brightness of the sun itself, which we see, is so dim a thing in comparison of that clarity and light, which is here represented to our sight, that the eyes would scarce open themselves to behold it. It is as if we beheld a most pure water running all upon crystal, with the sun

reflecting

reflecting upon it, and striking through it, in comparison of some other very muddy, seen in a cloudy day, and running upon an earthy bottom. Not that there is any sun represented in it, nor is that light like the light of the sun: in fine this light seems a natural light, and the other but a kind of artificial thing. This is a light which never sets, and hath no night, but as it is ever light, nothing disturbs it. In fine it is of such a kind, that how sublime soever the understanding of any person may be, he would never, all the days of his life, be able to conceive rightly what kind of thing it is. And it pleases God to set it before us so on a sudden, that we could not even open our eyes so soon, if that were needful for the seeing of it: but it helps us no more to have them open than shut, whensoever our Lord is pleased; for we see it whether we will or no. Nor is there any distraction that can divert us from it, nor any power to resist it: nor on the other side, any diligence or care that can procure it: and of this I have had good experience."

And here the Saint professes her inability to declare in what manner this so strong a light conveys itself into the inward sense, and imprints so clear an image upon the understanding, as to make it directly seem that our Lord himself is there. She also leaves it undecided, whether what she saw was only an image, or was indeed Christ himself, though she inclines much to the latter. "And sometimes," says she, "he comes with such an immense kind of majesty, that none can doubt but that it is our Lord himself; and especially after receiving the blessed Sacrament, for then we know well that he is there, since our faith assures us of it. He shews himself then so entire a Lord of this little house of mine, that

that the whole soul sees herself to be even dissolved (as it were) and consumed in Christ.

"O my Jesus, who can express, so as to be understood, the majesty with which thou shewest thyself? And how absolutely thou art Lord of the whole world, and of the heavens, and of a thousand worlds and of innumerable worlds and heavens, which thou canst create, as the soul understands, according to that high majesty, with which thou representest thyself to her; for then she knows that all this world is just nothing in respect of that, of which thou deservest to be Lord. Here, my sweet Jesus, the soul sees clearly, that it is but a beggarly kind of power which the devils have, in comparison of thine, and how he who pleases thee, may trample all hell under his feet. Here the soul sees the reason the devils had to tremble, when thou descendedst to *Limbo*, and how they could have wished to have been rather in thousands of other lower hells, to avoid the sight of so dreadful a majesty. I likewise perceive thou art here disposed to let our souls see how great thou art, and the power which thy most sacred Humanity hath, accompanied by thy Divinity. Here is well represented what kind of thing the *day of judgment* will be, where we shall see the majesty of this king, and behold his rigour towards the wicked. Here is true humility left in the soul, by her seeing her own misery, of which she can be now no longer ignorant; here comes in confusion and true repentance for sin; so that even when she is seeing how greatly our Lord shews her his love, yet knows she not where to dispose of herself, but is as it were, outright annihilated. In fine, I say, this kind of vision is of so excessive power and strength, when our Lord is pleased to shew a soul so eminent a portion of his greatness and majesty by it, that I hold it impossible

for

for any person to endure it, unless our Lord be pleased to assist the soul in a very supernatural manner, by making her remain in a *rapture* or *extasy*, and so to lose the vision of that divine presence by the act of enjoying. The soul is now clearly another thing than she was before; and, in my opinion, she hath a lively kind of love communicated to her anew, in a much higher degree. For though that other kind of vision I spoke of before, (which represents our Lord without any image), be a thing more sublime in itself; yet for the making it continue long in our memory, according to our weakness, and to entertain and keep our thoughts well employed, it is of very great advantage to us, that so divine a presence should also remain imprinted and lodged in the imagination.

"This kind of vision is to be valued at a very high rate, and, in my opinion, is without danger; for it is easily discerned by the effects, that the devil hath no power herein. It is true, that three or four several times, he hath had a mind to represent our Lord himself to me, after this manner, by a false representation; but though he takes the form of flesh, he cannot counterfeit it with any such glory, as when it is indeed of God: (Besides that his operations leave no good effects behind them in the soul, but rather bad ones:) and on the other side, that all this should be but a meer imagination or conceit, is utterly impossible; for the beauty and fairness of one only hand doth far surpass all our imagination. And besides, without our remembering or having thought of any such matter, to see such things present in an instant, which could never have been so fitted and adjusted by the imagination in a long time, (in regard that they so much transcend, as I have said,

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all that which we are able to comprehend in this world,) it must be impossible.

" Such reasons as these did I alledge, when they told me that those things were of the devil, or that I did but fancy them to myself, which happened often; and I would be bringing comparisons the best I could, but all availed little, for there being very holy persons in that place, and I being even misery itself in comparison with them, and our Lord not guiding them by this way, they presently feared that my sins, in all appearance, were the cause of these effects; and so it went from one to another, in such sort that divers came to be acquainted with these secrets of mine, though I discovered them to none, but only to my confessor, or such as he bade me impart them to. I said to them once, that if they who spoke thus to me, should affirm, that some person, with whom I had just been talking, and whom I knew very well, was not that person indeed, but that I only fancied it to myself, and that they were certain of this; I should have much more easily believed them than that which I saw. But if this person left certain jewels with me, and they remained still in my hands as pledges of the great love he bore me; and that I formerly had been the owner of no such jewels, and that now I saw that I was rich who before had been very poor; I should not then be able to believe them, how much soever I might have a mind to do it, especially since I could produce and shew these jewels of mine to others. For every one who knew me, saw clearly that my soul was grown quite another thing than before, and so my ghostly father told me; for the difference was very great in all respects, and very evident. For, having been so wicked, I used to say, I could not believe that if the devil did this to deceive me, and to carry me to hell, he would use means

so very contrary to his ends as these were, which had so greatly served to root out vices and to plant virtues in me.

" My ghostly father (Baltassar Alvarez) was of the *Society of Jesus*, a very holy man; and he also made the same answer, as I came to understand afterwards. He was a person of much discretion, and of great humility: but yet that humility of his cost me many troubles. For though he were a man of much prayer, and withal learned, yet he put no trust at all in himself: and our Lord not guiding his soul by this way (of supernatural favours) he had much trouble with me in several kinds. They even wished him to take heed of me, and to beware lest the devil should deceive him by his believing any part of that which I should tell him; and to this purpose they would be alledging to him the examples of some others. All this gave me vexation enough, and by degrees it went so far, that I was afraid I should scarce find any one to hear my confessions, but that every one would fly from me; so that I did nothing but weep, and it was a merciful providence of God that this father would still continue to hear me. But indeed he was so great a servant of God, that he was willing to expose himself to all for his sake; and so he still bad me not to offend God, nor to swerve from the directions which he gave me, and I should not fear that he would leave me; and that I should conceal nothing at all from him, (which I always observed) and if I did this, he told me, that though it were the devil he would be able to do me no hurt, but rather that our Lord would draw good out of that ill which the enemy desired to bring upon my soul; and he laboured to advance me in all he could. I being in such fear, did obey him in all things, though after an imperfect manner, for he had trouble enough

enough with me for above the space of three years whilst I confessed myself to him in the midst of these difficulties, and in the great persecutions which I underwent from the evil judgments which they made of me who held me for lost. Yet would he comfort me still with much pity and compassion. And if he had believed himself, I had not suffered so much. For God gave him to understand the truth in all things; and I am persuaded that the sacrament of penance, administered to me by him, gave him light."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XIV.

Her visions and other extraordinary graces continue, and encrease upon her, in spite of all resistance. Some particular favours are here specified.

TO return from this digression, it is easy to discern, as the saint proceeds to shew Chap. xxix. that the thing of which she had been speaking in the foregoing chapter; was no fancy. 'For how should we be able, says she, by any study of ours to represent the humanity of Christ to ourselves; and devise so great a beauty? for which there needed not a little time, if we would frame a thing any way like it, *whereas here in an instant*, we must behold it, when our Lord is pleased to represent it to us, and how he will, and as he will: nor can we diminish, or add any thing, nor use any means to that end, how much soever we may endeavour it; either towards the seeing it, or forbearing to see it, when we will, and when we would fix our sight upon the beholding any particular thing, the sight of Christ is instantly lost. It happened to me for two years and a half, that very ordinarily God was pleased to vouchsafe me this favour: (which now for more than three years he hath exchanged for another of a higher kind) and then seeing how he would be speaking to me, whilst I was beholding that extreme beauty, and the suavity with which he uttered those words, with that most lovely and divine mouth; and sometimes also with rigour; I had a very great desire to see the colour of those eyes, and the size and shape they had, to the end, that I might be able to relate the same; but I could never obtain to see them; nor did any diligence of mine, serve to procure it, but

the vision was rather absolutely lost. And though sometimes I see he looks upon me, with a kind of sweetness and compassion, yet this spectacle is of so mighty a force, that the soul is not able to endure it, but remains in so high a rapture, that the more to enjoy him all, she loseth this most beautiful sight. So that here it serves to little purpose, either to will, or not to will any thing: and it is clear that our Lord looks for nothing, but humility, and that we should confound ourselves, and be willing to take that which is given, and to praise him who gives it. And it holds good in all true visions, without exception, that one can do nothing at all, either towards the seeing more or less; and that all our diligences put together are neither able to do any thing, nor undo, for our Lord will have us see very clearly, that this is no work of ours, but only of his divine Majesty: whereupon we are so little moved to be the prouder by them; that they rather make us more humble and timorous, considering that as our Lord deprives us of the power of seeing that which we desire; so he can also take all these favours from us, and his grace too, in such manner as that we may come to be utterly lost. We must therefore always walk in fear, as long as we live here in this state of banishment.

Our Lord hath almost ever represented himself to me as risen again: and in the sacred host the same; except it be sometimes for strengthening me, when I happen to be in tribulation, that he hath shewed me his wounds, or as he was upon the cross, or as in the garden; and some few times with his crown of thorns; and at other times carrying his cross: and this, as I was saying, used to occur, only in the time of some necessity either of my own, or of others; but yet always in flesh glorified. And I have suffered affronts and vexations enough,

enough, in telling this, and great persecutions and many fears. They even thought themselves so very sure, it was the devil, that there wanted not certain persons, who wished I might be exorcised on that occasion. This gave me very little trouble: but the thing which I felt in good earnest, was the seeing my confessors afraid to hear my confessions; or when I came to know, that they had carried tales to them against me But yet still upon the whole matter, I know not how to be sorry for having seen these celestial visions: nor would I exchange any one of them for all the excellencies and delights of this whole world: for I ever held these things to be a very great favour of our Lord; and I esteem them as an exceeding great treasure: and our Lord himself hath many times assured me thereof. Withal, I found myself grown hereby to love his divine Majesty very much: and to him would I ever go to complain of all the troubles I had, and I always came out of prayer, both with comfort and with strength.

"As my visions grew on to increase, one of them who assisted me before, and used to hear my confessions, when my ordinary confessor was not in the way; began to tell me, that it was manifest it was the devil, and commanded me (since there was no other means to keep him off) that I should always be crossing, and blessing myself, when I saw any vision; and that I should use some exteriour action of scorn, and that I should hold it certainly to be the devil; and that by this means he would come no more. This was very painful to me: for considering that I could not possibly believe, but that it was God; it was a terrible thing for me to go through. Nor could I desire that these things should be taken from me: but yet, in fine, I performed all those acts, which I was commanded; and I besought

our Lord with much instance, to free me from being deceived; and this I did continually, and with abundance of tears. I begged it also by the prayers of St. Peter, and St. Paul; in regard that, I having had the first of all my visions, upon the day of their festivity, our Lord had told me, that they would take such care of me, that I should not be deceived. And accordingly I have often seen very clearly (though yet not by way of any *imaginary* vision) these two glorious saints, my very good patrons, upon my left hand.

But now this making signs of contempt put me to excessive trouble, when I saw this vision of our Lord. For when I saw him present before my eyes, it was impossible for me to believe it was the devil, though they should have torn me in pieces: and therefore it was a very severe kind of penance, they put upon me. Now that I might not be so perpetually crossing myself, I took a cross into my hands: and this I did almost always. But indeed I used not those signs of scorn so often: for this afflicted me too much; and I well remembered the affronts and injuries, which the Jews had put upon our Lord; and so I humbly besought him to pardon me, if I did the like; since I did it in obedience to them, whom he had appointed in his own place: and I prayed him not to lay it to my charge, since they were the officers whom he had placed in his church. He told me I should not be troubled at it; and that I did well in obeying them; and that he would bring them to understand the truth. But when they forbad me the use of mental prayer, our Lord appeared angry at it, and bad me tell them that this was tyranny: and he also gave me reasons, to make me know that this was not the devil.

"When once I held the cross in my hand, which was

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at the end of my Rosary, he took the same into his hand; and when he gave it me again, it consisted of four great stones, incomparably more precious than diamonds; for there is nothing here below that can equal this supernatural way; a diamond is but a counterfeit and imperfect kind of stone, in respect of those seen here. They had the five wounds of our Lord in them, after a most curious manner of expression. He told me I should see it just so from that time forward; and so I did: and now I no longer saw the matter, of which the cross was made; but only these precious stones; yet so, as that no other saw them but myself.

When they commanded me to make these trials, and use resistance to those favours, they encreased much more: for though I had a mind to divert myself, yet I never was out of prayer. Nay it seems to me, that I was in prayer, even whilst I slept: for here was much increased still the love of our Lord; and I would be then uttering amorous complaints to him; Nor was it in my power (though I had desired it, and least of all when I endeavoured at it) to give over my thinking on him. But yet still I obeyed as well as I could, though I were able to do little, or nothing therein. Our Lord did never free me from obeying them; but howsoever he commanded me to do as they bad me, he yet gave me assurance on the other side, and instructed me what I should say to them. And he gave me such concluding reasons, as caused in me all sufficient assurance. Not long after this, his divine Majesty began to perform what he had been pleased to promise me before; to assure me yet more that it was he: for there grew in me so great a love of God, that I knew not who infused it into me; for it was of a very supernatural kind; nor was it I procured it. I found myself even dying, through

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a desire to see God (my true life) nor did I know how or where to seek, or find this life, but by the way of death. There came upon me so great impetuosities of this love, that I knew not what to do with myself: for nothing could now give me satisfaction; nor was I able even to contain myself; but that really it seemed to me, as if my soul had been torn out of my body.

O sovereign artifice of our Lord! what choice and delicate industry art thou pleased to use with this miserable slave of thine. For thou didst hide thyself from me; and yet withal, didst even then press upon me by thy love, bringing on me such a delightful and savoury kind of death, as the soul by her good will would never be delivered from. Whosoever hath not at any time tried these so great impetuosities of divine love, cannot possibly understand them, *&c.* (They are of a far different kind from any of those devotions that we can any ways procure) 'for here it is not we, who lay on the wood; but the fire seems to be made all ready to our hands; and instantly we are cast into it, to be burnt in its flames. The soul doth not here procure to make herself feel the wound, made in her, by the absence of our Lord: but they drive sometimes a sharp arrow into the very liveliest part of the bowels and heart; so that the soul herself knows not either what she ailes, or what she desires: though she understands very well, that she desires and loves God; and that the said arrow seems to be toucht and rubbed over with some herb, to make her hate herself, for the love of this Lord; and with all her heart she would lose her life for his sake.

It is not in our power to express, or relate the manner how God approaches to such a soul, or the excessive pain it causeth her, which makes her not know what to do with herself. But yet this pain is so savoury

voury withal, that there is nothing in this life, which gives her more delight: for the soul would gladly be always dying of this disease. This pain and this joy together did so distract me, that I knew not how they both could possibly subsist. O what a thing it is to see a soul so wounded! She sees very clearly, that she herself did contribute nothing, from whence this love should grow; but only it seems that some spark falls down suddenly upon her from that immense Love of our Lord to her; which sets her all on fire. O how often, when I find myself in this case, do I remember that verse of David. *As the hart desires after the fountains of water, so doth my soul desire after thee O my God:* for really methinks that this is properly fulfilled then in myself. Whensoever this comes not upon me with great violence, methinks I can a little appease it (at least the soul endeavours to find some remedy, for she knows not what to do) with the performing of certain penances: but they are felt by her no more, nor does it then put her to any more pain, to shed her blood, than if the body were dead. She is in earnest search after the finding out some new ways or means to do something whereby she may suffer for the love of God. But so great is that other grief of mind which she feels, that I know not of any corporal torment that can remove it: for the remedy thereof consists not in any such things as these, since these medicines are too low for so high a malady. The soul indeed finds some little ease by these means, and by begging the remedy of her misery at Gods hands; though none she sees, but only death; for by that she hopes entirely to enjoy her sovereign good. At other times this pain falls upon a soul so fiercely, that neither this, nor any thing else can be done . . . for she can neither stir her feet, nor hands: and if she chance

be standing, and would sit down, she doth it like one transported: for she cannot so much as breathe, but only utter certain profound lamenting sighs, not great in show, because she is not able to express them though very great interiourly, and as by her presented.

"It has pleased our Lord that I have had sometimes this following vision. I saw an angel very near me, towards my left side, in a corporeal form, (which is not usual with me, for though angels be often represented to me, yet it is without my seeing them, but only according to that kind of intellectual vision which I spoke of before.) On this occasion our Lord was pleased that I should see this angel thus. He was not great, but rather little, and very beautiful; his face was so inflamed that he appeared to be one of those highest angels, who seem to be all on fire (with divine love,) and he might well be one of them whom they call *Seraphims*; for they never tell me their names, yet I well perceive that in heaven there is so great a difference between some angels and others, as I am no way able to express. I saw that he had a long golden dart in his hand, and at the end of the point methought there was a little fire; and I conceived that he thrust it several times through my heart, after such a manner as that it passed my very bowels; and when he drew it forth, methought it pulled them out with it, and left me wholly inflamed with a great love of God. The pain of it was so great, that it forced great groans from me, and the delight which that extremity of pain caused in me was so excessive, that there was no desiring to be rid of it; nor is the soul then contented with any thing less than God himself. This is not a corporal but a spiritual pain; though yet a body do not fail to participate some, yea a great part thereof.

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It is such a delightful intercourse between the soul and God, as I beseech him of his infinite goodness, that he will give some touch or taste of it, to whosoever shall imagine me to lie. During the time when I was in this state, I went up and down, like one transported; neither cared I to see or to speak, but olny to burn, and be consumed with my pain, which was a greater happiness to me, than any that can be found in things created.

"In this state was I several times, when our Lord was pleased that I should fall into certain great raptures or extasies, which I was not able sometimes to resist, even when I was in presence of secular people; and so to my great grief they grew to be public. Let him be blessed for ever, who vouchsafes to impart such high favours to one who corresponds so ill with so great benefits."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XV.

The account she gives of her raptures or extasies, and of the effects of them, in the discourse of her life. Chap. 20, and 21.

"I would be glad to know," says she, "how to declare (through the favour of God) the difference there is between *union* (of the soul with God in prayer) on the one side, and *rapture*, or *flight of spirit*, as some call it, on the other: for these two latter signify, in substance, but one and the same thing; and it is also called *extasy*. The advantage is very great which belongs to *rapture*, beyond *union*, and the effects, also, which it produces, are much greater. For meer *union* seems to be always after the same manner, both in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end, and it is always confined to the interior. But as *raptures* are visitations of the soul, in a higher strain, they are wont to produce their effects not only interiorly but exteriorly also. Let us therefore now consider that this last *water* (of the fourth degree of prayer, of which she is here treating) is so very plentiful and abundant, that if it be not, because the soil of the garden doth not consent to receive it, we may believe that the very cloud itself of that great Majesty is here with us, which raineth itself down upon this earth. And so when we are grateful to our Lord for this great blessing, acknowledging the same by our works, according to the uttermost of our power, our Lord catches up the soul, as one may say, as the clouds catch up the vapours from the earth; and so taking her up, the cloud rises up to heaven, and carries her up along with

with it, and shews her certain things belonging to that kingdom which is prepared for her. I know not whether this comparison will be thought to suit well with that which I am speaking of; but I am sure that in reality of truth it passes so. In these raptures it doth not seem that the soul doth even animate the body, and sot he body itself remains with a kind of trouble and fainting, through the want of the natural heat, though yet with an excessive sweetness and delight. There is here no means at all to resist; though in *union* there may be some, yet not without suffering pain, and using some force. But here, for the most part, there is no remedy at all, nor any help; but many times, without your thinking of it, or being any way able to prevent it, there comes such a speedy and strong impetuosity upon you, that you see and find this cloud to raise itself instantly up, or rather that this strong eagle takes you, and carries you quite away between her wings. I say, that you understand, and find yourself to be carried away, and you know not whither. Now although this is accompanied with delight, yet so great is the weakness of our natural condition, that it puts us in some fear in the beginning. And therefore the soul stands in need, in this case, of much more courage and resolution, than in any of the occasions mentioned. For here she must be content to run all risks, whatsoever may come on it, and to leave herself wholly in the hands of God, and to go whithersoever she shall be carried, with a good will; for in fine carried she must be, whether she will or no, and that with so great extremity of strength and speed, that howsoever I had a mind very often to resist it, and employed all the strength I had to that purpose, (especially at some particular times, when these things fell out in public) it was but seldom that I was able to do any

any thing. At other times it was altogether impossible for me to hinder it; for my soul would be carried absolutely away, and ordinarily even my head, as it were, after it, so that I could not stop it; yea and sometimes my whole body, so as to be raised up from the ground. Now so it was, that when I had a mind to resist these raptures, there seemed to be somewhat of so mighty force under my feet, which raised me up, that I know not what to compare it to, which came with much more impetuosity than any of those other things of spirit; and so I was even torn, as it were, in pieces, for the combat is great; but in fine all helped little, for when our Lord hath a mind to do any thing, no power is able to stand against it. At other times he is pleased to content himself with letting us see that he is disposed to do us that favour, and that when we oppose ourselves through humility, there follow yet the self same effects, as if we had wholly consented.

"Now these effects are great, for first the mighty power of our Lord is hereby made manifest; and that when his divine Majesty is pleased to dispose of things otherwise, we are no more able to detain our bodies than our souls, nor are we masters thereof, but must, though against our will, acknowledge that we have a superior, and that these favours come from him, and that of ourselves we are able to do just nothing at all; and so by this means a great impression of humility is made on the soul. And further, I confess that it bred also in me a great fear, (which at first was extreme) to see that a massy body should be thus raised up from the earth. For though it be the spirit which draws it after it; and though it be also with great sweetness and delight, (if it be not resisted) yet our senses are not there-

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by lost; at least, I, for my part, was so perfectly in my senses, that I was able to understand that I was then raised up. There doth also hereby appear so great a majesty in him, who can do this, that it makes even the very hair of the head to stand on end, and there remains in the soul a mighty fear to offend so great a God; but yet so that this fear is wrapped up in an excessive kind of love, which she conceives anew towards him, whom she finds to bear so great a love to such wretched worms as we are. For now he seems not content with drawing the soul to himself, after so particular and so evident a manner; but that he will needs also draw up the very body too, even whilst it is so mortal, and compounded of so filthy an earth as we have made it by our sins.

"This favour also leaves in the soul a very wonderful kind of loosening, and a disengagement from all the things of this world, which I know not well how to express as it is, but methinks, I may well say, that it is not only in some manner different, but is also greater than those others, which are only in the spirit. For though in those others, there be a total untying and loosening of the soul from all things, forasmuch as concerns the spirit; yet here it seems, our Lord is pleased, that even the body also itself should partake of this disengagement. And it breeds such a new kind of aversion and disgust with regard to the things of this world, that it makes even our very life much more painful to us. It brings also upon us another kind of pain, such as we can neither tell how to procure, nor yet how to free ourselves from it, when we have it. Now I would be extreme glad to be able to make this great pain be understood, but I believe I shall not know how to do it; though yet I will say somewhat if I am able.

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"These things come upon me now at last, after all those visions and revelations, of which I shall hereafter write, *&c.* This pain is sometimes greater and sometimes less; and here I will speak of it as when it is greater. Now those impetuosities, which were wont to come upon me when our Lord was pleased first to send me raptures, (mentioned in the foregoing chapter) have, in my opinion, no more to do, by way of comparison, with this pain I now speak of, than things *corporal* have with the most *spiritual*; because that other pain, mentioned before, seems to be such as, although the soul do feel it, yet she feels it together with the body, and so both of them have a share in it; and it is not accompanied with that extremity of being quite abandoned and utterly forsaken, which is felt in this. Now in acquiring of this, as I was saying, we have no part at all ourselves; but there often comes a longing desire unexpectedly upon us, and I know not from whence it arises. And upon this desire, which penetrates the whole soul, even in one instant, she begins to afflict and bemoan herself, so as that she rises much above herself, and indeed above all whatsoever that is created; and God is pleased to make her so very desolate, and so much disgusted with regard to all things that pass with time, that how much soever she may endeavour to the contrary, there is not one thing in this world, which can either bear her company, or by which she would be willing to be accompanied, but would be glad even directly to die in that solitude. For if any body speaks to her, or if she would employ all her power to speak to others, it serves to very little purpose; for, do what she can, her spirit doth still not cease from making her find herself to be perfectly alone. And though it seems to her as if God were then extremely

remote

remote from her, yet at times he communicates his greatnesses to her, by a manner more strange than can possibly be expressed. Nor do I think that any one will either believe it or can understand it, but only some such persons as may have felt it. For this is no communication to give comfort, but only to shew the reason which that person hath to be afflicted and distressed, for being absent from that Good, which comprehends all goods in itself. By means of this communication both the desire doth increase, and so doth also the extremity of that solitude, wherein the soul finds herself, together with a certain pain, which is so very delicate and penetrative, (the soul being then placed in that kind of desert) that this may even literally seem to be, at that time, the very thing of which the royal Prophet spoke: *I have watched, and am become like a sparrow all alone upon the house top.* And indeed it seems to me that this kind of soul is not then in herself, but is rather upon the very top or ridge, as one may say, of herself, yea and of all things else which are created; for then, methinks, the soul remains on the very highest and most supreme part of herself.

At other times, the soul seems to find herself as in the extremity of want and misery; and that then she is saying to herself, and asking herself: *ubi est Deus tuus? Where is now thy God?* And here it is to be noted, that I knew not well then what those verses signified in the vulgar tongue, yet when afterwards I came to know it, I was much comforted to see, that our Lord was pleased to bring them to my memory, without any procurement at all of mine. At other times I also called that saying of St. Paul to mind, that *he was crucified to the world.* I say not that I was so, for I see but too well that I am not; but, methinks, the soul in this case is very much after

after that manner, for she gets no comfort from heaven, because she is not there, nor carries she any affection at all to the earth, nor is she also there, but remains as if she were crucified, hanging between heaven and earth, and suffering all the while, without receiving any succour from either one or the other. For that which comes to her from heaven, (which is, as I have said before, an admirable knowledge of God, far above all that we can desire) doth but serve for her greater torment, because it increases her longing desire, in such sort that the excessive pain thereof puts her, in my opinion, even past herself, only that she remains so but a very little while. Now this condition of mind seems to be no less than the very agony and pangs of death itself, yet withal there is so very great a contentment taken in this suffering, that I know not what to compare it to. It is a sharp yet savoury and delightful martyrdom, since all that concerns this world, which it is possible to represent to the soul (yea though it were the most agreeable object she had ever been accustomed to) is by no means admitted by her, but instantly cast away from her. She understands also here very well, that she cares for nothing at all but her God; and yet she considers no particular thing in him, but will have him altogether, and she knows not what she would have. I say she knows not, because her imagination represents nothing at all to her; yea, in my opinion, during a great part of the time, wherein she is after that manner, the powers of the soul do not work; but as in the case of union and of raptures, they are suspended by her joy, so here they are wholly suspended by her pain.

" O that I were able to give your Reverence to understand this well, were it but that so you might make me know more particularly what it is. For now this is

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the state, in which my soul most commonly finds herself, and whensoever I am not employed about some thing, she is put upon these straights, and these pangs of death. She is afraid, when she sees them begin, lest they should cost her, her life; but yet when it was once begun, she would be glad, that, during all her life, she might continue in the state of suffering; though it be so very excessive, that one is scarce able to endure it. For sometimes I am almost without any pulse at all, as my sisters tell me; who then come towards me, to see what passes; for now they begin a little more to understand it. And the bones of my arms are so stretched, and my hands are so stiff, that I cannot sometimes bring them together: and such a pain remains till the next day after in my wrists, and in my body that it seems at if I had been racked and disjoined. And I sometimes conceive that our Lord may one day perhaps think fit (in case this course should go on) to make it end, with the ending of my life. For so great a torment as this, may well, in my opinion be snfficient for so great an effect as that, save only that I deserve not to be so happy. All the anxiety of my desire at these times is that I may die. For I neither remember purgatory, nor yet those great sins for which I deserve hell. But all is now forgotten through that vehemency of desire I have to see God: yea and that vast solitude, and desert, wherein I am at that time, seems then a much more desirable thing than all the company in the world. If any thing were able to give the soul comfort in this case none it would be the treating with some one who had endured the same torment: for now though she complain thereof, it seems, none will believe her. And now your Reverence shall do well to consider, what kind of rest, or ease, it is possible for me to enjoy in this life; since that which I was wont

to find, by means of solitude and prayer, (in which our Lord was pleased to give me great consolation) is now most usually converted into this torment: which yet withal is so delicious, and the soul perceives it to be so high a value, that now she delights in it more, than in all those other favours, which she was wont to possess. For she holds it to be more secure, as being the way of the cross, *&c.*

"These impetuosities, which are here described, and which I enjoy at present, arrived after the other favours, which our Lord did me; and after all that, of which I have written in this book (of my life.) And whereas in the beginning, I found myself to be in some fear about it (as it usually happens to me, whensoever it pleases our Lord to do me any new favour) he bad me not to fear; but to esteem this for a greater favour than all those others were, which he had formerly been pleased to bestow upon me; because the soul was purified by this pain, and burnished and refined here as gold in the crucible, that so it might be more capable of being enamelled with the ornaments of his gifts and graces; and so that was purged away here, which otherwise was to have been so in purgatory.

"It seems that I have gone from my purpose, for I was beginning to speak of *raptures*, and this which I have been speaking of now is a higher thing than a *rapture*. To return therefore to treat of *raptures*, and of their effects: it seemed to me many times that they left my whole body so light, that all the weight thereof was utterly gone, yea and sometimes to such a degree, as in effect I knew not how to set my feet upon the ground. When the soul is in a *rapture*, the body remains as if it were utterly dead, being able many times to do absolutely nothing at all; but as it chances to be at the time,

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so it remain, keeping still the same posture; and though she seldom looseth her senses, yet it hath happened to me now and then that they have been totally lost, but this for a very short time at once. But the most usual effect is wont to be, that she finds herself in disorder, so that she can do nothing of herself as to the exterior; but yet she understands and hears, as if a thing were spoken to her from afar off. I say not that she understands or hears, when she is in the highest part of the *rapture*, at those times when the faculties or powers are lost, because they then are very straightly united to God; for then, in my opinion, she neither sees nor hears, nor perceives at all; but this total transforming of the soul into God is wont to continue but a little while. When she returns to herself, it will happen to her (if the rapture hath been great) to go a day or two, or sometimes three, with the powers so absorpt, and as it were stupified, that they seem not to be altogether themselves.

Now comes in the pain, to be able to know how to live again. Here are the feathers imped to make a strong flight, and here the sick ones fall. Here is the standard of Christ our Lord totally raised up, and displayed, and it seems as if the captain of this fort (the soul) gets up himself, or is instantly carried up to the highest tower there, to plant the said standard for the glory of his Lord. The soul sees now very clearly how little all worldly things ought to be esteemed, or rather how direct a *nothing* they are. He who is seated high is able to discover much. Already she renounces the having any will of her own, and is resolved to have no other will than that which our Lord gives her; and thereupon she addresses herself to him, and surrenders to him the keys of her will, nor will she do any thing at all but according to his will; nor will she be mistress so much as

of herself, nor of any thing at all; but if there be any thing in her which is good, she desires his divine Majesty may dispose thereof, for she will not from that time forward possess any kind of thing, as having propriety therein, but desires that all things may be entirely done in conformity to the will of our Lord, and for his glory.

Now indeed all these things really are wont to pass in this manner, if the *raptures* be true, and the soul remains with those advantages and benefits which I have related; and if these do not follow, I should be apt to doubt very much that they were not *raptures* from God, but rather of that kind of *ravings*, of which St. Vincent speaks. This I understand, and have seen by experience, that the soul is wont in these cases, to become a lady over all, and to acquire so much liberty in less than an hour, that she cannot even know herself. Yet she well understands that all this is none of her own, nor doth she know how she comes to obtain so great a blessing, but she understands clearly the exceeding great benefit and advantage, which every one of these *raptures* brings to her.

"O my God, how clearly doth a soul see here the sense of that verse of the Psalmist, and that both he had reason, and that all the world should have reason to desire *the wings of the dove.* For it is easily and clearly understood of that *flight* which the spirit makes, by which it raises itself up above all creatures, and in the first place, from and above itself. But this is a sweet *flight*, a delightful and pleasant *flight*, and a *flight* without noise. What kind of dominion doth such a soul possess, which our Lord doth once conduct to this pitch, that she may be able to look down upon all things, without being once entangled by any of them!

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And how full of confusion will she now be, for that time wherein she was entangled before! And how much will she be amazed to look back upon that blindness of hers; how full of compassion will she be, for such as do yet remain therein? She would here cry out very loud, to make men understand how mightily they are abused and deceived; and so also she doth sometimes, and then they rain down whole showers of persecutions upon her head, &c. She is also much afflicted with the thought of that time wherein she had any regard to the *point of honour*, and for the gross error wherein she was, to imagine that to be *honour*, which the world calls honour; for she now sees that it was all an abominable lie, and yet that every body lives in the practice of it. But now this soul understands, that right *honour* is built not upon a lie but upon truth; esteeming that to be worth something which indeed is so, and holding that which indeed is nothing, in no account at all; since all is nothing, and less than nothing, which comes to have an end, and pleaseth not God. She laughs at herself for the time wherein she made any account of *money*, or had been covetous thereof; though in this last particular, I do not believe I ever had any fault to confess, but it would have been fault enough to have held it in any manner of account. And what in fine is it that men can buy with this *money*, which they so much desire? Is it any thing of true worth? Is it any thing which is durable; or to what end do they desire it? A miserable kind of satisfaction, procured by that which costs them dear, for hell is many times gotten therewith. O that all men would at length resolve to hold it but for unprofitable! How orderly would the world then proceed! How free would all places be from unjust contracts, &c. The soul

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sees also then the great blindness there is in the conceit which men frame about the pleasures of this world; and how we buy nothing by them, even for this life here, but labour and disquiet. Ah how great disquiet, and how little content; and in fine what a deal of labour in vain?

"Here the soul is also enabled to discern in herself not only the gross cobwebs of greater faults, but even every little grain of dust, how minute soever it may be, and so, how much soever she may have laboured to perfect herself, if once the sun shine bright upon her, and pierce her through with his beams in good earnest, she will find herself dusty enough still. She is like a glass full of water, which you will think very clear and pure, unless the sun shine upon it; but if you see it once pierced by those beams, you will find it to be all full of motes. This comparison is very punctually true; for before the soul is in this extasy, she conceives herself to have been very careful not to offend God, and that she hath done according to the uttermost of her power; but yet being come thus far, as that this sun of justice shines upon her, which makes her open her eyes, she sees so many motes in herself, that she would be glad to shut them again; for she is not yet become so true an eaglet of this swift and strong eagle, which bred her, as that she can be able to look stedfastly upon this sun. But how little soever she can hold them open, she sees herself all impure, and calls that verse to mind which saith, *who shall be just in thy presence.* When she beholds this divine sun, the brightness of it dazzles her sight; when she looks on herself, the clay (of her own imperfections) stops her eyes; and so this poor dove is blind, yea and it happens many times that she remains wholly blind, being absorpt, amazed, and as it were lost

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and quite vanished away, in the contemplation of so many mighty greatnesses as she then discovers. Here finally is true humility acquired, the soul not caring at all to speak well of herself, or yet that others should do it. All the good that she hath, is ever addressed and given by her to God; and if she be drawn to say any thing of herself, it is wholly for his glory; for she knows that she hath no share therein, and she cannot be ignorant thereof if she would, as discerning it by the very sight of her eyes, which whether she will or no, are shut towards the things of this world, and kept open to the understanding of real truths.

"When once the soul is come to this pass," says the Saint, (chap. xxi.) "they are not bare desires which she hath for the service of God; for then his divine Majesty gives her strength also to put them in execution. Nor can any thing so difficult be represented to her, wherein she thinks she may serve him, upon which she will not cast herself all at once, and yet she will conceive she doth nothing all the while, because she sees clearly that all things are merely nothing, save only the pleasing of God. The only trouble is, that no occasion of trouble offers itself to persons so unprofitable as I am. But O thou my only good, be pleased that once there may come a time, wherein I may be able to pay the least mite of all that great service which I owe thee. O strengthen thou my soul, and dispose it first, O thou the good of all my goods, my dear Jesus, and then ordain presently the means, whereby she may do something for thee: and that there may be no such person as may endure to receive so much and to pay nothing. Let it cost, O Lord, ever so much, let not these hands of mine appear always so empty in thy presence. Behold, here is my life, here is my honour, and here is my will; and

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thou knowest that I have given all to thee, and that I have given it all to thee, and that I am entirely thine; and therefore do thou dispose of me according to thy own good-pleasure. I see, O my Lord, very well, how little I am able to do; but yet being now come to thee, and having mounted up to this tower, from which truths are truly discovered, if thou depart not from me, there is nothing which I shall not be able to perform; but if thou depart, how little soever it may be, I shall go where I was going, that is, to hell.

"O what it is for a soul, which finds herself in such a condition as this, to be brought to return again to converse in the world, and to behold the comedy or puppet-shew of this miserable life, and to spend her time in complying with this body of hers, by eating and sleeping! All this now wearies the soul, which knows not how to escape from it, but finds herself caught and chained. She then sees much more evidently the captivity to which we are subjected by these bodies of ours, and by the misery of these lives which we here lead; and we come to know the reason which St. Paul had to beseech God to deliver him from it. And now she cries out aloud with him, and begs of his divine Majesty to set her at liberty: and this is often done with so great an impulse of mind, that the soul would fain get presently out of the body, in pursuit of this liberty; and in the mean time, she is not freed, she walks up and down the world, like one sold for a slave, to serve and drudge in some strange country; and that which afflicts her yet more, is that she cannot meet with many who will lament with her, and desire that which she desires, &c.

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"And now I have set down the effects which those *raptures* that proceed from the Spirit of God, are wont to produce. It is true that some of them do more, and some less, and the perfection of them grows increasing; but it is true also that our Lord knows how to work so well upon a soul, even in one of these *raptures*, that there will not remain much for the soul herself to work, towards the acquiring of perfection. For none is able to believe, without experience, how much it pleases our Lord to bestow upon a soul, in such an occasion, nor is there any diligence of ours which can, in my opinion, attain to it. When once my soul arrived so far, as that God was pleased to do her this great favour, my miseries did cease, and our Lord gave me strength to disengage myself from them; and it moved me no more to be afterwards in those occasions of imperfection, and with those persons who had formerly been wont to distract me, than if I had not been there at all; nay, rather that now helped me, which was wont to hurt me. And all things now served as fit means to make me know God more, and to love him better; and to see how deeply I was obliged to him; and to grieve the more for my sins. I well understood withal that this came no way from myself, nor had I gained it by any diligence of mine, but only his divine Majesty, of his own meer goodness, had given me strength for this purpose. From the time when our Lord was pleased to favour me with these raptures, to this present, this strength hath gone on increasing, and he of his bounty hath also held me fast with his hand, that I might not turn back again any more. And now, methinks, I do almost nothing on my part; but I understand, in a very evident manner, that our Lord is he who works (in me). When once our Lord brings a soul so near himself, he goes by little and little communicating

communicating to her very great secrets. In these *extasies* are true revelations imparted, and other great favours and visions: and all these serve to humble and to fortify the soul, and to give her a disrelish for the things of this life; as also to know more clearly the greatness of that reward which our Lord hath prepared for such as serve him. For since we here see what great rewards he is pleased, even in this life, to bestow upon his servants, how much more will he do for them in the other?

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XVI.

Our Lord remedies many of her troubles, and gives her great light and consolation by means of that holy man, father Peter of Alcantara. The great desolations and conflicts she sometimes endures; with a variety of temptations, with which the devil seeks to disquiet her.

TO return from this digression concerning *raptures*, and their effects, to the history of the holy mother's life, "when I came," says she, chap. xxx. "to observe the little or nothing I was able to effect, towards the resisting of those so great impetuosities, of which I was speaking, I grew to be in great fear in having them; for I could not understand how it was possible that pain and joy should consist together: that corporal pain and spiritual joy were compatible, I knew very well; but that so excessive a spiritual pain should be compatible with so extraordinary a spiritual joy, did quite astonish me. I still did not give over to endeavour to resist the coming of it; though yet I had so little power that way, that sometimes I grew weary. I armed myself with the cross, by way of defending myself from him, who by his cross defended and succoured us all. I saw that none understood me, though yet I durst not say so to any one, but my ghostly father; for that indeed would have justified them in saying that I wanted humility.

"Our Lord was pleased to remedy a great part of my trouble, and even for that time all of it, by bringing to Avilla that blessed man, father Peter of Alcantara. When, therefore, a certain widow lady, (Guimara d'Ulloa) a great servant of God, and a particular friend of mine, came to know that so great a man was there, and knew also the great necessities and afflictions I was under

under, (for she had been witness of them, and had comforted me in several occasions; for her faith was ever so great, that she could not believe but that it was the Spirit of God, which all the rest said was the devil; and she being a person of very good understanding, and of great secrecy, and one to whom our Lord vouchsafed to do great favour in prayer, his divine Majesty was pleased to give her knowledge of those things, of which they who were learned were wholly ignorant) she, without saying any thing to me, got leave of my provincial, that I might remain in her house for about eight days, to the end that I might the better treat with this holy man; and so both there and in several churches, I spoke with him often, on this first occasion of his being here; for I communicated my affairs with him afterwards on divers occasions.

" Having given him an account of my life in brief, and of the manner of my proceeding in prayer, with the greatest clarity that I could; almost at the very first I found that he understood me by experience, which was indeed the only thing whereof I had need at that time, for then I could not so well understand these things, at least so far as to express them. Now this father gave me very great light; for as to the visions, which were not *imaginary*, (or presented to the imagination) I could by no means conceive what they might be, nor did understand much better those others, which I only saw with the eyes of my soul; and as to those which are visible to the corporeal eyes, which I then imagined to be most to be esteemed, I had seen none at all. This holy man gave me light in all these things, and declared all to me; and he bade me not be troubled, but to bless God, and to be so very sure that it was his Spirit, that though it were no article of faith, yet nothing could be

be more certainly true, nor which I might more firmly believe. And he comforted himself very much with me, and shewed me all courtesy and favour, and ever after had great care of me, and communicated his affairs and businesses with me: and finding that I had the self-same desires of those things, which he had already put in practice, and that I was also so full of courage, for our Lord had given me desires, together with great resolution) he took particular contentment to treat with me. For whensoever our Lord brings one to this state, there is no joy or comfort which can be equal to the meeting with some such other person, to whom our Lord hath given some beginnings of the same: for then perhaps I had not much more than a beginning, by what I can conceive; and God grant that I have it yet. He had also very great compassion of me, and told me that one of the greatest afflictions upon the earth, was that which I had endured, namely, the opposition and contradiction of good men; and that there was a great deal still for me to suffer, because I should always have need of help, and there was none in that city who did understand me: but that he would speak with my ghostly father, and with one also of those others who afflicted me most, which was that secular gentleman of whom I spoke before. For he, as being a person, who loved me perhaps more than the rest, made all the war upon me; and he was a man of a tender and holy soul, and, considering how lately before he had found how wicked I was, he could not rest secure.

"The holy man Fr. Peter did as he said; for he spoke with those two persons, shewing them causes and reasons why they should assure themselves, and disturb me no more. My ghostly father needed little, the other gentleman so much, that this did not altogether suffice; though

though yet it were a means to keep him from terrifying me so much as he had done. We agreed that I should write to him the success I had from thenceforward, and to recommend one another much to God; for so great was his humility, as to make some little account of the prayers of this miserable creature, which gave me confusion enough. But he left me with very great comfort and joy, and directed me to proceed securely on with my prayer, and to make no doubt at all but that it was of God; and that whensoever I might be in any doubt, for my own greater security, I should impart whatsoever occurred to my ghostly father, and that then I should account myself safe. Yet notwithstanding all this, I could not rest so entirely secure, (because our Lord was pleased to guide me still by the way of fear) but that I was apt to apprehend it to be the devil, when they would be telling me that it was he. So that howsoever this holy man did comfort and quiet me, yet did I not so entirely believe him as to remain without any fear at all: especially when our Lord sometimes left me in certain troubles of mind, and temptations, which I shall now relate.

" It hath happened to me sometimes, (and so it doth also still, though not so often) to find myself in so excessive a trouble and affliction of mind, joined with extreme torment and pains of body, from violent diseases, that I knew not which way to turn myself. I have at other times been subject to corporal miseries yet more grievous, but as I did not find with them such sorrows of mind, I passed through them with great alacrity. But now when they came both together, the misery of it was so intolerable, as that it oppressed me exceedingly. At these times I forgot all those great favours which our Lord had done me; there only remained with me such a kind

a kind of memory of them as of a thing which I had dreamt; and this only served to give me so much more pain. For the understanding, on these occasions, grows stupid, and is obscured in such manner, as that it made me enter into a thousand doubts and suspicions, that I had not formerly understood things well; and that perhaps I had followed fancies instead of truths, and that it was enough for me to be deceived myself, without seeking to abuse and deceive so many good men; and I seemed to myself at these times to be so very wicked, that methought all the mischiefs and heresies that have lately arisen, were owing to my sins. Now this was a false kind of humility, which the devil suggested on purpose to disquiet me, and to try if he could bring my soul to despair. And I know so well, by experience, that this is a work of the devil, that now as he finds I understand him, he torments me not so often in this way as he was wont.

"This temptation is clearly discerned by the restlessness and disquiet with which it begins, and by the tumult which it causes in the soul, all the while it lasts, and by the obscurity and trouble which it produces, and by the dryness and indisposition to prayer, or to any good at all; for it seems both to stifle the soul, and to bind up the body, so that it is fit for nothing. Whereas true humility comes not with any such tumultuous disorder, nor doth it disturb the soul, nor overcloud her, nor cause in her any aridity; but rather comforts her, and proceeds in a quite contrary way, with gentleness, suavity and light. For though the soul by true humility knows herself to be wicked, and is in pain to consider how bad she is, and frames to herself huge aggravations of her wickedness, as great as can be imagined, &c. yet this pain brings with it a comfort, to see the

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favour our Lord imparts to her, in letting her feel it for such a subject, and to consider how well employed it is. She grieves indeed for whatsoever she hath done against God, but then on the other hand his mercy cheers her up, and dilates her heart; and she hath a light which helps her to put herself to confusion, and to praise his divine Majesty for vouchsafing to endure her so long. But in that other false humility, which the devil suggests, there is no light for any thing that is good; but it seems to the soul as if God were ready to put all the world to fire and sword, according to the way in which the enemy represents the divine justice to her. And though she has faith in God's mercy, for the devil hath no such power as to destroy that) yet she believes this in such a manner, that it affords her no comfort; but rather when she beholds God's great mercy, the tempter makes it serve for her greater torment, because she thinks herself to have been thereby obliged to so much more. This is a stratagem of the devil, and one of the most painful, and of the most subtle and disguised that I have heard of; and I am sensible that our Lord is pleased to permit it, and to allow him leave to do this, to try and to tempt, as he did Job; though as I am so wicked, he permits it to be done to me with so much rigour.

"This happened to me once, on the day before *Corpus Christi eve*, (a festivity to which I am much devoted) and at that time it lasted with me but one day, but at other times for a week or a fortnight, and sometimes for three weeks or more; especially at those holy times, which were wont to give me most delight in point of prayer. Methinks on these occasions he surprizes my understanding, in an instant, with certain things, sometimes so very trivial, that at other times I would but have

have laughed at them; but then he makes the imagination stoop to whatsoever he lists, and the soul remains as it were chained to it, without being able to think of any thing but of those impertinencies which the temptation represents, and which indeed have no substance at all, but serve only to choak the soul, in such manner as not to suffer her to be mistress of herself. So that it seems to me sometimes as if the devils were then playing with the soul as men would do with a ball, and she all the while has no means at all to deliver herself out of their hands. Nor can it be expressed how much she suffers in this case; and though she goes about in search of some remedy, God is pleased to permit that she finds none. Her faith is then laid asleep, as the other virtues also are, though yet it be not utterly lost. Her love also is so lukewarm, that if she hears God spoken of, she hearkens in such manner as to believe he is what he is, because the church declares it; but she hath utterly lost all memory of whatsoever experiment she hath had of him in herself. For her to go, and pray, or remain in solitude, is but to increase her affliction; for the torment which she then feels in herself, (and yet without knowing why) is an insupportable thing, in my opinion is a kind of pattern of hell, as our Lord himself was pleased to give me once to understand, in a certain vision. For here the soul burns within herself, without knowing by whom, or by what way she is set on fire, or how to escape from it, or how to quench it, *&c.*

"Many times, I used to have some quiet and respite after I had communicated, and sometimes in the very instant of approaching to the blessed Sacrament, I should grow so perfectly well both in body and soul, that it amazed me. For it seemed that all the darkness of my soul was dispersed and discharged in an instant; and that upon the rising of this sun, I immediately came to discern

those fooleries wherein I was engaged. At other times by the hearing of some one word, which our Lord spoke to me interiorly, such as, *be not afflicted*, or, *be not afraid*, I remained most perfectly well, and sometimes also by seeing some vision, I became as if I had ailed nothing. I then entertained and recreated myself with my God, and lamented myself with him, for his permitting me to suffer so great torments; though I must confess he made me very ample amends, because these afflictions were always followed with a great abundance of favours. Methinks the soul here comes, like gold, more refined and pure out of the crucible, to see our Lord within herself; and then are all those troubles accounted little, which before seemed insupportable. She is willing then to return again to suffer them, if our Lord may be served the better by it, and even to endure still greater tribulations and persecutions, provided they be without offending God; and she rather rejoices in suffering them for him, for all in the end brings her more profit: though for my part I did never bear them as I ought, but very imperfectly.

"At other times troubles come upon me in another kind, so that methinks I am deprived of all possibility of thinking then of any thing of good, or of so much as desiring to do it; for that I have both a body and soul which are utterly useless and burdensome. But at these times I am not subject to those other temptations and disquiets, but only to a disgust in all things (though I know not why) so that nothing can give contentment to my soul. I procure, on these occasions, to divert and employ myself in the performing of some good works in the exterior way, to busy myself as it were, whether I will or no; and I see and know well how little it is any soul can do, when God's grace is hidden from her. This puts me not to any trouble, for the beholding my own baseness after this manner, gives me a kind of satisfaction.

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"At other times I find myself so, as that I am utterly unable to frame any distinct conceit of God, nor indeed of any good thing at all after a staid manner. Nor can I then put myself in mental prayer, though I am alone, and though I am sensible that I know God: but I find it is my understanding and imagination that hurt me on these occasions; for my will, methinks, stands right with God, and is disposed to all goodness; but this understanding (or rather imagination) of mine is so entirely lost, that it seems to be like some mad fool whom nobody is able to bind; nor am I so far mistress of it, as to make it quiet for one *credo*. Sometimes I laugh at myself, and consider what it would be, if such persons as esteem, me good, should discern me in this dotage and distraction. And here I come to know better my own misery and the exceeding great favour which our Lord is pleased to do me, when he holds this fool (the imagination) bound in perfect contemplation.

"I have a great pity for the soul, to see her in such bad company; for I would fain see her rather at liberty, and I say to our Lord: *When, O my God, shall I be so happy as to see all my soul united in celebrating thy praises, that all its powers may enjoy thee? Permit not, O Lord, any more that she be thus divided into pieces:* for now it seems no otherwise, than as if every piece were running a several way. These things pass thus many times with me, and I am sensible that the little health I have sometimes, contributes much to these inconveniencies. I also reflect much upon the hurt which original sin has brought upon us; for, methinks, it is grown from thence that we are incapable to enjoy so great a good; and my own sins also are part of the cause; for if I had not committed so many, I should have remained more entire and confirmed in good.

"As I have here spoken of some interior and secret

temptations," (saith the Saint, chap. xxxi.) and troubles which the devil caused me; so now I desire to speak of others, which were in some manner public, and in which one could not be ignorant of his being the agent. I was once in a certain *oratory*, and he appeared to me on my left side, in an abominable figure. In particular I observed his mouth whilst he spoke to me, and it was most terrible, and it seemed to me that a very great flame came out of his body. He told me, after a most hideous manner, that though I had freed myself once out of his clutches, yet he would fetch me back again. I was in a mighty fear, but I blessed myself as well as I could, and he vanished away, but presently returned again, and this happened to me twice; nor did I know what to do, only I had *holy-water* near at hand, and I cast it towards the place where he was, and he returned no more.

"Another time he was for five hours together tormenting me with very dreadful pains, joined with such interior and exterior disquiet, that methought it was not to be endured. The women, who were then with me, were astonished to see what passed, but neither could they tell what to do, nor I how to help myself. My custom is, whensoever any corporal sickness or pain is very intolerable, to make certain acts within myself, the best I can, beseeching our Lord, that his Majesty will give me patience, and that I may (if he pleases) continue to suffer so, even till the end of the world. Therefore now when I found myself put to suffer with so much rigour, I helped myself by making some such acts and resolutions, that so I might bear it the better. And our Lord was pleased that I should clearly understand that it was the devil, for I saw hard by me a certain little Negro in a very abominable shape, gnashing his teeth like one desperate, because he lost

by

by what he hoped to have gained. As soon as I saw him, I laughed, and shewed no fear at all; for there were some persons by, who knew not what to do to me in this case, nor what remedy to apply to so great a torment, the blows being so strong that he made me give myself, I not having any power at all to resist him, and, which was worse, feeling so great an inward restlessness and disquiet, as I could by no means allay. Nor yet durst I so much as call for *holy-water*, lest I should put them in fear, who were present, or let them know what the matter was. I have found by much experience oftentimes, that there is not any thing from which the devils fly more, so as not to return again, than they do from *holy-water*. For they fly also from the *cross*, but presently return again. Certainly the virtue of *holy-water* must be great, and, for my part, my soul finds a very particular kind of comfort, when I take it, with such a refreshment as I am not well able to express, with an interior delight, which comforts my whole soul, and this is no fancy, nor a thing which hath happened to me only once, but very often, and hath been observed by me with great attention. Wherefore as my torment would not cease, I told them that were present, that if they would not laugh at me, I would beg of them some *holy-water*. They brought me some, and sprinkled me with it, but it did me no good: I sprinkled some towards the place where the wicked spirit was, and he presently departed, and my malady went quite away, as if they had stroked it off from me with their hands, save only that I found myself as weary as if I had been cudgelled extremely. I afterwards considered, that if the devil, when our Lord permits it, is able to do such a deal of mischief to us, both in soul and body, even when we are not his, what will he do to them that shall be wholly left to his possession. And this consideration

gave

gave me a very great desire anew to free myself from such ill company.

" At another time, and that lately, the same thing happened to me, when I was alone, though it lasted not long; and then also I drove the devil away with holy-water: and two religious women who came thither, after he was departed, said they smelt a very filthy stink, as of brimstone, though for my part I smelt it not. Another time I was in the quire, and I fell into a great fit of recollection, and I went away from thence, for fear of something being observed. But the nuns that were near, all heard a noise of very great blows, in the place where I was. I also heard close by me some talking together, as if they had been debating about some business, though I knew not what in particular it was; for I was in such depth of prayer, that I understood them not, nor had I any fear.

" This used to happen almost every time, when our Lord did me the favour that some soul or other received benefit upon my persuasion and advice. There came once a certain person to me, who had lived about two years and a half in a mortal sin, and during all that time he neither confessed it, nor reformed himself; and though he then confessed his other sins, yet concerning that one, he was wont to say to himself, how could he ever confess so foul a thing, and yet he had a desire to free himself from it, but knew not how to effect it. I had great compassion of the man, and much grief to see God so offended; and I promised him to beseech God to give him remedy, and that I would also procure that others should do the same, who were better than myself. And accordingly I wrote to a certain person about him, sending my letter by the party. And it so fell out that upon this first letter, he confessed his sin; and God was pleased, at the instance of those many holy persons, to whom

whom the business had been recommended, (I myself also, miserable as I am, not failing to solicit it the best I could) to extend his mercy to this soul. The man wrote to me, that he was reformed so far already, as that some time had passed, in which he had returned no more to that sin; but that the torment which the temptation caused him, was so great, that he accounted himself to be in a kind of hell, and therefore that I must still recommend him to God. Upon this I recommended him again to my sisters, the nuns of our monastery, by whose prayers our Lord was pleased to do me this favour; for they took the matter very much to heart, and it was a person of whom none could guess who it was. And I, for my part, humbly besought the divine Majesty to ease him of those torments and temptations to which he was subject; and that those devils might come to torment me, provided that I might not offend our Lord in any thing. And it is most true, that shortly after this, I did endure most grievous torments for the space of a month; and these two particulars, which I just now related, happened at that time. But our Lord was pleased (as I have since learned) that the devils should not afflict that person any more, and his soul got strength daily, and he grew to be absolutely free: nor could he satisfy himself with giving thanks to our Lord for his delivery, but he thanked me also, as if I had done somewhat therein. But indeed the opinion he had, that our Lord did sometimes shew me favour, might be of some benefit to him: for he said, that whensoever he found himself to be much assaulted and pressed, he used to read my letters, and that presently thereupon he should find himself rid of the temptation. He was much amazed to understand what I had suffered, and the manner how himself came to be free; and I also did wonder at it, and certainly I would have willingly suffered it all, many years, for the seeing

seeing that soul free. Let our Lord be praised for all for the prayers of such as truly serve him, as I believe my sisters do, in this house, can do much: but yet because I had procured those prayers, the devils were more enraged against me, and our Lord also permitted it for my sins.

"About this time, one night, I thought the devils would have strangled me; but as soon as I had procured a quantity of holy-water to be cast upon me, I saw a multitude of them falling, as it were, headlong, and running desperately away. So frequently do these accursed creatures torment me, and the fear which I now have of them is so very little, (by seeing that they are not so much as able to stir, unless our Lord give them leave) that I should weary your Reverence, if I should relate all the particular passages. What is said already may serve to shew, that the true servants of God need not trouble themselves at these frights which the devils raise to make us fear them; and let them be sure, that every time they see that we despise them, they remain with the less strength, and the soul acquires more dominion over them: and some great benefit is always reaped, which I will not here relate, for fear of being too tedious.

"Being one day in a certain monastery, and in the quire, upon Trinity Sunday, I was in a rapture, and saw a great contention of devils against angels. I knew not at that time what this vision meant; but before a fortnight had passed, it appeared sufficiently, in a great disagreement which fell out between some persons addicted to mental prayer, and many others who were not so: and there came a great deal of harm to the house from this contention, which continued long, and bred much disquiet.

"Another time I saw a multitude of devils round about

about me; but it seemed to me that I was encompassed with a great light, which permitted them not to approach me. By which I understood that our Lord kept them from coming near me, in any such sort as to make me offend his divine Majesty.

"In the forementioned temptations, sometimes the thoughts of all the vanities and weaknesses of my former life were revived in me, so that I had need to recommend myself much to God. Then presently I was tormented with the apprehension that all had been of the devil, till such time as my ghostly father quieted me. For it seemed then to me, that even the first motion of an evil thought was not to approach to one, who had received so great favours of our Lord. At other times it torments me much to see myself so much esteemed, and especially by eminent persons, and that they should speak so much good of me. In this I have suffered, and still suffer much; for presently I cast my thoughts upon the life of Christ and of the saints; and methinks I walk in a way very contrary to theirs, because they went through nothing but contempt and injuries. And this makes me walk with such fear, that I scarce dare hold up my head, and would be glad to be quite out of sight; which never happens to me when I am under persecution, how much soever I may be otherwise afflicted in body or mind; for then my soul seems to be as in her kingdom, and that she treads all things under her feet. This I took at first to be virtue and humility, but now I am sensible it was a temptation. When also I conceived that these favours, which our Lord doth me, would be publicly known, it was so excessive a torment to me, that it extremely disquieted my soul: and I thought I could more willingly have been buried alive, than that any such thing should happen: and so when I came to have those very great *recollections* and

and *raptures* in public, in such manner that it was not possible for me to resist them; I remained afterwards so confounded with shame, that I would have been glad not to appear, where any one might see me. Being once extremely afflicted at this, I was asked by our Lord, *what it was, whereof I was so much afraid? for that from this there could only happen one of these two things; either that they would murmur against me, or else that they would praise him;* meaning that, as both these things would prove an advantage to me, I had no reason to be thus troubled. Now this quieted me very much, and comforts me still, whensoever I call it to mind.

"This temptation proceeded so far, that I was desirous to quit this place, and to have retired, where I might be unknown; but my ghostly father would not permit it. These fears deprived me of liberty of spirit, and I came to understand afterwards, that this was no good humility, since it gave me so much disquiet. And our Lord upon that occasion taught me this truth, that if *indeed* I were absolurely convinced and assured, that nothing at all of good was mine, but that it was all of God; it would follow, that just so, as I was not sorry to hear other persons praised, but rather was glad, and greatly comforted that God shewed himself in them; so neither should I be sorry that his works might be also seen in me.

"I fell also upon another extreme, and it was to beg of God, (making particular prayer for this purpose) that when any person should entertain a good opinion of me, his divine Majesty would be pleased to declare my sins to him, to the end he might see how, without any merit of mine, it had pleased our Lord to do me favours; and this I do ever much desire. My ghostly father bad me not to ask it; but hitherto, till very lately, if I saw any person who had an extraordinary opinion of me, by circumlocutions,

cumlocutions, or by what ways I could, I made him know my sins, and thus I conceived myself to find ease. This proceeded not in me, to my thinking, from humility, but that divers persons addressing themselves to me I seemed to myself to have imposed upon them; and it is very true that they were indeed deceived, if they thought that there was any good in me, yet had I no desire to deceive them, nor did I ever intend any such thing, but our Lord for some end permits it; nor would I ever have imparted any of those extraordinary things, even to my confessors, had I not been convinced it was necessary; for otherwise I should have had much scruple. But now I perceive that all these fears and troubles, and superfluities of excessive humility, do savour of much imperfection, and proceed from want of true mortification. For a soul perfectly resigned into the hands of God is not troubled a jot more that they should speak well of her than ill; if once she understands thoroughly (for as much as God will give her that grace) that she hath nothing at all of herself. But let her confide in him, and in the mean time let her prepare herself for persecution, for she shall certainly meet with it, in such an age as this, when ever our Lord will have it known, that he doth a person such favours as these. For upon one such soul as this, there are a thousand eyes cast, and there is not a little cause to fear, and this ought to have been my fear; and the other was not humility but pusillanimity. For a soul which God permits to be exposed thus to the eyes of the world, may expect to be a martyr of the world.

CHAPTER XVII.

Our Lord is pleased to put her in spirit, into a place of hell, which was prepared for her sins. The benefit she reaps from this vision.

"AFTER our Lord," says the Saint, chap. xxxii. "had done me many of those favours which I have related, as well as many others, which were very great; he was pleased that one day, whilst I was in prayer, I should find myself (though I could not tell how) on a sudden lodged in a place of hell. I understood that our Lord was pleased to let me see there, the place which the devils had prepared for me, and which I had deserved for my sins. This lasted but a very short space of time, but yet if I should live many years, I hold it impossible to forget it. The entrance to it seemed to be like a long close alley, or rather like a low dark and narrow oven. The ground seemed to be like mire, exceeding filthy, stinking insupportably, and full of a multitude of loathsome vermin. At the end of it there was a certain hollow place, as if it had been a kind of a little press in a wall, into which I found myself thrust and close pent up. Now though all this which I have here said, was far more terrible in itself than I have described it, yet it might pass for delightful in comparison with that which I felt in this press. For this torment was so dreadful, that no words can express, or give to be understood the least part of it. I felt a certain fire in my soul, which I am not able to describe, as indeed it was. For all those almost insupportable torments which I have endured, by the shrinking up of all my sinews, and other ways, (which in the judgment of physicians, were the greatest, which could be suffered, in the corporeal way in this world,) and some also, as I have said, which were

caused

caused by the devil; were all in comparison with what I suffered there; joined with the dismal thought, that all this was to be without end or intermission for ever. And even this itself is still little if compared with that continual agony the soul is in; that trifling, that anguish so exceedingly sensible; together with that desperate and orturing discontent and disgust that cannot be expressed. For to say, it is a butchering, or rending of the soul, is to say little: for this would seem to express a violence used by some other agent, to dispatch and destroy her: whereas here she is her own executioner, and even tears herself in pieces. Now as to that interior fire, and that unspeakable despair, which transcends all those intollerable torments and pains, it is not in my power to describe them. I saw not who it was that tormented me: but methought I found myself both burnt and cut in all at once . . . . . In so dreadful a place there was no room for the least hope of a possibility of once meeting with any comfort or ease: neither was there any such thing as sitting or lying down. I was thrust into than place like a hole in the wall: and those walls, which are also horrible to the sight, press in upon their prisoner; and every thing there choaks and stifles. There is nothing there but gross darkness, without the least glimps of light: and yet I know not how it is, though there be no light at all, yet one sees there all that may afflict the sight.

"Our Lord was not pleased that I should see any more of hell at that time. But afterwards I had another vision of most terrible things, as punishments inflicted for certain particular vices; for as much as I could judge of them by the sight, seemed to be more hideous than the former. But as I felt not the pain (as I did in the other vision I have been speaking of) they did not give me so much fear. But in this other vision our Lord

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was pleased that I should really feel those torments, and that affliction in spirit, as if my very body had been suffering them there. I knew not how all this could be; but I understood well enough that it was a very great favour; and that our Lord was pleased I should discern by the sight of my own eyes, from whence his great mercy had delivered me. For it is nothing to have heard talk of hell nor to have meditated on several sorts of torments, *&c.* for all is nothing to this: since this is quite another kind of thing; and in short the torments of this world are no more than a mere picture, when compared to the life; the burning which is felt in this world, but a trifle in respect to the fire there. I remained so astonished and amazed at it; and so I am even now, whilst I write this, which happened to me six years ago, my blood seems to chill in my veins, through fear. And whatsoever troubles or pains, I now suffer, if I do but call to my remembrance what I then endured, presently all that can be suffered in this world appears to be just nothing at all. And therefore I say again that this was one of he greatest favours that our Lord hath ever done me; for it hath been of very great benefit to me, both in making me lose all fear, with regard to the tribulations and contradictions of this life, and giving me strength for the enduring them: and also in teaching me to render thanks to our Lord; for delivering me (as now I may hope) from those dreadful and never ending torments.

" Since that time all seems easy to me, in comparison of one moment of such sufferings as I endured there. I wondered that having so often read books, which give an account of some part of the torments of hell, I yet feared them so little, and regarded them not as I ought; and considering in what case I then was, how it was possible for me to take satisfaction in any such thing,

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as was like to bring me at last to so bad a place. Be thou eternally blessed, O my God! For how well hast thou made it appear, that thou lovedst me incomparably better than I did myself? How often O Lord, hast thou delivered me from that dark and horrible dungeon? And how often have I returned to cast myself in thither again even against thy will? Hence also I came to be in very great pain for the many souls which are condemned; especially of the *Lutherans*, because they had once been members of the *Church* by their *baptism*. This was followed with strong impulses to do good to souls: so that it seems to me very certain, that for the saving of any one of them from so excessive torments, I could suffer many deaths, with a very good will. I consider that if we see a person in this world, whom we dearly love, in any great affliction or pain, it seems that even our natural disposition invites us to compassion; and if their suffering be great, it afflicts us too. And therefore to see a soul which is for ever to endure that supreme affliction, and misery of all miseries, who shall be able to bear it! Surely no heart can brook it, without great grief. And since we are moved here to so much compassion of those whose misery, at the furthest, is to end with their lives; and hath a term prefixed, whereas this other has none; I know not how we can be at rest, considering what a vast number of souls the devil daily carrys with him to hell. This also makes me desire, that in buisines of so great importance, we be not satisfied with less than the doing all we can in our part; and that we leave nothing unattempted: and I humbly besecch our Lord he will give us his grace for this purpose.

"When I consider, that howsoever I were formerly most wicked, yet I had some little care to serve God: nor yet did I then commit certain sins, which are swallowed down by the world, as if they were nothing; and

I had

I had endured most dreadful sicknesses, with that great patience, which our Lord was pleased to give me for that purpose. And I was also not inclined to murmur, or detract, or to speak ill of any body. Nor was I covetous, nor envious, for any thing that I could ever remember. For though I were so wicked, I had usually the fear of God before me: and yet notwithstanding all this, I see where the devils had provided me a lodging; from whence I conclude, that it is a dangerous thing, that we should take our contentment here: and that a soul ought to take no rest, which is frequently falling into mortal sin. O let us for the love God, remove all the occasions thereof! For our Lord will help us, as he hath done me. His Divine Majesty voushsafe not to fail to hold me fast in his hand; that so I may not relapse any more: for in that case, I see already to what place I must finally go to eternity. I beseech our Lord, even for what his Majesty is, not to suffer it. *Amen.*

After this terrible vision the holy mother, though she already practised much mortification, took up a resolution of leading a still more strict and austere kind of life; and so began to design the foundation of a new monastery, in which both strict enclosure should be observed; and all the rigours of the primitive rule of her order, which had been much remitted in latter times should be again revived. But of this, and of the rest of her foundations, we shall speak more at large, after we have related, from the account of her life, some other particulars of the favours she, in the mean time, received from heaven.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XVIII.

The great benefit she receives from other heavenly favours. Divers particulars of her extacies, and revelations.

" I am loth, saith the holy mother (C. 33) to recount any more of those favours, which our Lord hath done for me, since those which I have related already, are too many that they should be thought to have been shewn to so wicked a creature. But yet to obey our Lord who hath commanded it, and your reverence also, who expects it; I will declare some more things here for his greater glory. His Divine Majesty grant that it may serve for the profit of some soul, to see, since our Lord hath vouchsafed so highly to favour so wretched a thing as I am, how much more he will do, for such as serve his Divine Majesty in good earnest: and that every one may be encouraged thereby, to give his Majesty contentment, since even in this life he vouchsafes us such earnest and pledges.

" But here it is to be observed, that in these favours which God doth to a soul, there is sometimes more, sometimes less glory. For the glory, joy and consolation, which he imparts, is so much greater in some visions than in others, that I was quite amazed, to find so great a difference of enjoying, even in this life. And sometimes our Lord is pleased in some one vision, or rapture, to give so much, that it seems impossible to desire any thing beyond it, in this life; nor doth the soul indeed desire more; nor would she wish for more content and joy. Though yet since our Lord hath been pleased to shew me, how great the difference is in heaven between the glory enjoyed by some, and that which is enjoyed by others; I see very clearly, that even here also there are no limits set in giving, when our Lord pleases. And

so could I also wish, that there were no limits set, in my doing service to his Majesty, and in employing my whole life strength, and health upon it: and I would not lose the imaginable degree of further enjoyment, through any fault of mine, and in this I declare myself thus far: that if this choice should be offered me, whether I would rather remain subject to all the afflictions of the world, even till the end of it; and then ascend boy that means to the enjoying of never so little more glory in heaven; or else without any affliction at all, enjoy a little less glory; I would most willingly accept of all those troubles and afflictions, for a little more enjoying that so I might also understand more of the greatness of God: Because I see that he who understands more of him, doth love him and praise him so much the more. I say not, but that I should be contented, and should esteem myself very happy to be in heaven though it were but in the lowest place there: for our Lord would show an abundance of mercy thereby to me, who had been designed to so wretched a place in hell: and I humbly beseech his Divine Majesty, that in fine I may go to heaven, and that he will not look upon my great sins. But that which I say is this; that if our Lord would give me grace to labour much for him, and if I were able to do it, I would not upon any terms (how much soever it might cost me) forego the gain of any degree of celestial glory, by fault. Miserable creature that I am, who had once lost it, all by my so many offences.

" It is also to be noted that in every favour of a vision or revelation which our Lord did me, my soul did still remain with some great gain, and in some visions, with very great. For by seeing Christ our Lord, his admirable and excessive beauty hath remained imprinted in my mind; and I have it with me even to this day: for

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in this case, one only time would have served the turn; how much more so very many times in which our Lord has vouchsafed to impart this favour to me. From this sight, I reaped also another considerable advantage; and it was this: I was formerly subject to a very great fault, by which much hurt came to my soul; which was that whensoever I began to observe that any person had a good inclination to me, and was agreeable to me; I grew to bear so much affection to him, as that my memory would bind me, in a manner to be still thinking on him; though yet without any intention at all to offend God: but I would be very glad to see him, and to remember him and to consider the good qualities, which I found in him: and this was so prejudicial a thing, that it did my soul a great deal of harm. But when once I came to behold the great beauty of our Lord, I saw none after that, who could seem passible in comparison to him; nor who was able to take up my thoughts: but what by casting my eye upon that image of him, which is engraven in my soul, I should remain with so much liberty of mind in this respect, that every thing which I have seen since this, is become loathsome to me in comparison of the excellencies and graces, which I discerned in this Lord of mine. Nor is there any knowledge, nor any manner of comfort, which I set any value upon, in comparison of that, which comes by the hearing of one single word, which proceeds out of that Divine mouth of his: how much more so many as I have heard. Nay I hold it a kind of impossible thing (unless our Lord should permit, for my sins, this memory to be quite taken away from me] that any creature should ever so far possess my mind as that I should not instantly be free, by a little recovering the remembrance of this Lord.

" Moreover I grew to have both more love and more confidence towards this Lord of mine, after I had seen him; as one with whom I was now come to have a kind of continual conversation. I saw that though he were *God*; he was also man, and that he did not wonder at our weakness, for he well knows our miserable condition and frail composition, which is ever subject to falls of so many kinds, by that first sin of Adam, which he came to repair. And although he be my Lord, I may yet treat with him as with a friend; because he is not like the grandees or lords we are wont to meet with in this world, who place all their lordships in certain affected authorities, and who must appoint set times for audience, and admit not any but noted persons to speak with them: and if perhaps any poor man have business with them, it must cost him many labours, and returns, and favours, before he can get it dispatched. And much more if one hath any thing to do with the king himself; for poor folks must not presume to come near him, but be content, to enquire who are his favourites, (who, we may be sure, are not such as tread the world under their feet, because such persons are wont to speak real truths, and so are not for the court) and to recommend their business to them. But, O thou King of glory, and Lord of all kings! thy kingdom is not set out with such straws as these, since it hath no end. Nor is there any need of third persons to introduce us to an audience with thee. By our seeing thy person, we instantly perceive that thou alone deservest to be called *Lord*, so great is the majesty which thou shewest, that there is no need of many attendants and guards, whereby thou mayest be known to be king. Whereas if any earthly king were left quite alone, he would hardly be known to be the king, for in himself he is no more than other men, and therefore something must appear about him,

to make men believe that he is the king. And he hath so much more need of using these external helps, because otherwise the people would make no account of him; for his appearing so powerful is not from himself, but his grandeur and state is derived to him from those about him. But who is able, O my Lord, and my King, to represent that Majesty with which thou appearest? It is impossible to forbear to see that thou art a great emperor in thyself, and it quite amazeth us to behold thy majesty. But yet it puts me to a greater amazement, O my Lord, to see in the company of this majesty, the great humility and love which thou shewest to one so wretched as myself. For we may ever treat and speak with thee, about all things, even as we will ourselves, when once we shall have lost that first amazement and dread, which we have at the sight of the majesty of thy presence: though yet then there remains still a greater fear of offending thee, and that, O Lord, not for fear of the punishment, for we do not regard that at all, in comparison of the misery which it is to lose thee. Behold here some benefits of this vision of our Lord."

After this, the Saint, in the following chapter (xxxiv.) relates some particulars of the many favours she had received; and of certain secrets of heaven, which had been discovered to her in her *extasies* or *raptures*, and divers other things relating to the state of departed souls.

"Being so very ill one night that I thought fit to excuse myself from *mental* prayer, I took up," says she, "a pair of beads or rosary, to employ myself *vocally*, not taking any pains to recollect my understanding (or *imagination*) though as to the exterior, I was sufficiently recollected, and retired in an oratory. But when our blessed Lord pleaseth, these diligences of ours serve to little

little purpose; for after I had remained a while praying in this manner, there came suddenly upon mè a *rapture* of spirit, with such an excessive impetuosity, that there was no power in me to resist it. It seemed to me that I was placed in heaven, and the first persons whom I saw there, were my father and my mother. I also saw some things besides, and those so very great, and in so very short a time (as the space of an Ave Maria) that I was amazed, as conceiving that it was too very great a favour for me. In this circumstance of the time's having been so very short, I may perhaps be deceived; for it may have been longer, but at least it seemed to me very short. I was afraid of an illusion, but yet to me it seemed none. I knew not what to do, for I was extremely ashamed to go with it to my ghostly father, not in my opinion, out of any humility, but because I thought he might make a jest at it, and say: O what a St. Paul, or St. Jerome is this woman grown, to see the things of heaven! Yea, and because these glorious saints had seen such things as these, I grew to be in so much the more fear of myself, so that I did nothing but weep bitterly, in regard that in my opinion there was no probability at all that such favours should be done me. But yet howsoever I went, notwithstanding all my repugnance, to my ghostly father; for though these things were most difficult and painful for me to express, I never durst conceal any thing from him, by reason of the very great fear I had of being deceived and deluded. When he saw me so greatly afflicted, he endeavoured to comfort me much, and told me many good things, to free me from the pain wherein I was.

"It hath happened to me several times since, that our Lord hath shewed me yet greater secrets (of his heavenly-kingdom.) I say, he hath shewed them to me, for there is no means or possibility for a soul to be able

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to see any one jot more than our Lord is pleased to represent to her; so that I never saw more than merely what he was pleased to shew me at every several time. But that was so very much, that the least part of it sufficed to make me remain all amazed, and to find my soul very much improved towards the undervaluing and despising of all things in this life. I wish I could tell how to give some part of the least of that which I there saw to be understood; but when I am thinking how to do it, I find it is impossible. For though the light which we see here, and that which is represented there be all of it light, yet still there is so great a difference that there is no comparison: for the clarity and brightness of the sun itself is a mean and very obscure thing in respect of this. In fine, the imagination of man, how subtle and refined soever it be, cannot reach to the drawing or describing the manner of this light, nor yet of any other of those things, which our Lord gave me here to understand, and that with such a sovereign kind of delight, as cannot possibly be declared. For all the senses enjoy such a superior degree of sweetness, that it can no way be fully expressed; and therefore I think it best to say no more of it.

"I was once for above an hour in this condition, when our Lord shewed me admirable things; and seeming not to depart from being near me, he spoke these words: *see, daughter, what they lose, who are against me, and do not thou forbear to tell them of it.* But, O my Lord, what good will my telling do them, whom their own evil actions have so blinded, if thy divine Majesty do not give them light? Some there are, to whom thou hast given it, and they have profited much by the knowledge of those greatnesses of thine: but, O my Lord, they see them shewed to such a wretched and miserable creature, that I cannot but esteem it a wonder, to find any

any one to believe me. Blessed be thy name, and blessed be thy mercy; for at least I have plainly seen an evident amendment in my own soul from the sight of these things, and how glad should I have been, if I might still have remained there, and not have come back to live here any more: for the contempt wherein I held this whole world was very great, and it seemed to be no better than dung to me. And now I see how meanly we are employed, who are detained here.

"While I remained (by obedience) in the house of the Lady Louisa de la Cerda, sister to the duke of Medina Celi, it happened to me once, when I was sick with a violent pain at my heart, that she, looking upon me with much compassion, commanded one day certain jewels of hers to be brought forth, which were of great value, and one in particular of diamonds, which she prized at a very high rate; conceiving that the sight of them would recreate and revive me. But I smiled at her within myself, and had compassion to see, how mean things men esteem, when I considered what our Lord hath laid up for us; and I thought how impossible a thing it would be for me, to put any manner of value upon such toys as those, even though I should endeavour it, unless our Lord should first take away from me the memory of those other heavenly treasures which I had seen. This kind of favour gives so great a liberty or freedom from all earthly bands, and so great a dominion to the soul, that I know not whether it can possibly be understood by any other persons but such as possess it. For it is a proper and natural discharge and untying of the soul from all things created: and this grows absolutely without any labour of our own; God doth it all, for his majesty shews us these truths, and that in such a manner, that they remain so imprinted and engraven in the soul, as to make us see clearly that

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it was not possible for us to acquire them, especially in so short a time, by any diligence of our own.

" Upon this I also came to have very little fear of death, which formerly I had a great apprehension of; but now it appears to be a very easy thing to such as apply themselves (in earnest) to the service of God. For in a moment the soul sees herself freed out of this prison, and placed in repose. For this way of God's carrying the spirit up to shew her such excellent things, in these raptures, seems to bear a very close resemblance with the passage of a soul out of the body, at the hour of death; since in an instant she sees herself entirely possessed of all this good. It also seems to me that these favours did me very much good, towards the bringing me to know our true *country*, and to see that we are mere *pilgrims* here; and it is a great matter to see what passes there above, and to understand where in fine we are to live for ever: for when one goes to settle and stay for good ad all in any country, it contributes much towards the enduring all the incommodities of the journey, to know it is a place where we shall be in great repose. It makes us also with ease able to consider heavenly things, and to procure that our conversation may be in heaven. And this is a great gain, for now the only looking up at heaven recollects the soul, in regard that our Lord having been pleased to shew her some glimpse of that which is there, she is thereby induced to pause and meditate upon it. And sometimes it so falls out to me, that they whom I know to be living there, are the only companions I choose to solace myself with; these being indeed the people that seem truly alive, and those others, who live here upon earth, appearing to be so very dead, as that this whole world affords no company at all to me, especially when I experience those great impulses. All seems to me

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but a dream, and all the objects of these corporal eyes of mine, a jest, and a toy; but that which already I have seen with the eyes of my soul, is the thing she desires; and because she finds herself to be yet far off from thence, this is death to her.

"One day after mass, it being the vigil of Pentecost, I went to a more remote place, where I often used to pray; and I began to read in a certain book, written by a Carthusian, upon this feast. And meeting there with those signs, by which such as are *beginners* or *proficients*, or *perfect* may understand, whether the Holy Ghost dwell in them or no: in reading what was there said of those three states, it seemed to me that God through his goodness, was in this manner present with me, for so much as I could understand. And whilst I was praising his divine Majesty for this blessing, I called to mind that when I had read the same thing formerly, I wanted very much of this present condition, and thus I came to know how much I was indebted to our Lord. I began also to consider the place which I had deserved in hell for my sins, and I gave great praises to God, in regard that I found my soul, as I thought, so extremely changed, that I could hardly know her. As I was in this consideration there came a great impulse or impetuosity upon me, without my knowing the occasion of it. It seemed as if my soul was endeavouring to get out of my body, for now she could not possibly contain herself any longer, nor find herself capable of staying any longer in the painful expectation of so great a good. Now this was so excessive an impulse, that I could not tell what to do with myself; and it was very different, to my thinking, from those which I have had at other times, nor did I know what my soul ailed or would have, it was so much altered. I leaned myself on one side, not being able to sit upright, for I found my natural

forces

forces began to fail me. Being in this state, I saw a dove about my head, very different from them of this world, for it had not the like kind of feathers, but the wings seemed to be composed of certain little shells, which darted forth an immense splendor. This dove was much greater than any ordinary dove, and methought I heard a noise which it made with its wings, for it was hovering over me about the space of an *Ave Maria*. But my soul was by this time in such a condition, that losing herself in an extasy, she also lost the sight of the dove. My spirit then grew quiet, upon the entertaining such a guest, though so wonderful an encounter might well have disturbed her and frighted her. But she beginning already to enjoy, all fear soon vanished, and with joy began the quiet, she remaining in a rapture. The glory of this rapture was extremely great, and I continued during the most part of the time of the whitsun-holidays, so transported and so stunned, that I knew not what to do with myself, nor how to contain so great a grace and favour. I neither heard nor saw, in effect, by reason of the excess of my interior joy; and I am sensible that from this time forward, my soul hath found a very great improvement, enjoying a more sublime love of God, and firmer virtues than before; so that I esteem this last favour as greater than any of those I mentioned above. Our Lord be blessed and praised for all eternity! *Amen.*

"I saw also at another time, the same dove over the head of a certain Dominican father; only that methought both the beams and brightness of the wings did spread and extend themselves much farther, and it was given me then to understand that he was to win souls to God.

"Of the *religious* of a certain *Order*, yea of that whole *Order*, I have seen great things. I have seen them

them sometimes in heaven, with white banners in their hands; and other things, as I was saying, very admirable. And accordingly I have for this *Order* a great veneration, for I have treated and communicated with them much, and I see that their life is agreeable to that, which our Lord hath given me to understand concerning them.

When I was one night in prayer, our Lord began to utter some words to me, by which he brought to my remembrance, how wicked my life had been. These words gave me both confusion and grief; for though they carried not with them any rigour, yet they caused in me such a tender kind of feeling and sorrow, as even dissolved me. For one finds more benefit with regard to the knowing one's self, by one of these words, than we could be able to acquire in many days, by our own consideration of our misery; for it brings such a truth to be so engraven in the soul, as that we cannot possibly deny it. He represented to me also those inclinations of mine, which I had formerly entertained with so much vanity, and told me that I was to set a great value upon the desire I had that he would lodge in my affection, which formerly I had employed so ill, and that he would accept thereof. Now when he began thus to bring my wicked life to my remembrance, which cost me a world of tears; and when I also considered, that at that time I had done no good thing, in my opinion, I began to think with myself, whether he might not perhaps intend me some new favour; because whensoever I have received any particular favour from our Lord, it has commonly been, after I have in this manner defeated and annihilated myself. And I conceive that our Lord proceeds thus with me, that I may see the more clearly how far I am from deserving these favours. Shortly after this, my spirit was so absorpt (in an *extacy*) that it seemed

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be absolutely out of my body, at least it could not be perceived that it lived in it; and then I saw the most sacred *humanity* of our Lord in a more excessive glory than ever I had discerned before. Now this was represented to me, by a certain admirable and clear notice of his being placed in the very bosom of his father. And yet I know not what to say how this was; for it seemed to me that without seeing, I saw myself present before that very Divinity. I remained so amazed, and after such a manner, that I think there passed some days before I was able to return to myself; and still I conceived that I had that majesty of the Son of God present with me, it remained so engraven in my imagination.

"I have seen this vision three other times, and this, in my opinion, is the most sublime vision which ever our Lord shewed me, and it brings the greatest benefits with it. For it seems that the soul is greatly purified by it, and that it utterly taketh away all strength from our sensuality. It is a vehement flame, which seems to burn up, and even perfectly consume all the desires of this life. For though, (God be blessed for it) I had before no inclinations to vain and impertinent things, it was here declared to me, in a very distinct manner, that *all was vanity:* and in particular how vain were all the titles and grandeurs of this world. It is also of great instruction, for the raising up of our desires unto the *pure truth.* There remains here a reverence of God imprinted in the soul after a certain manner, which I know not how to describe; but it is of a very different kind from whatsoever we can acquire here. It creates also a strange amazement in the soul to consider, how she ever durst, or how any creature can presume so far as to dare to offend such an exceeding great majesty.

"I have declared sometimes heretofore these effects of visions, and that a soul receives sometimes more, some-

times

times less profit by them, but in this the profit was extraordinarily great. When I came to *receive*, and called to mind that incomparable majesty which I had seen, and which I understood to be the very same which is in this most holy Sacrament, (and sometimes our Lord is pleased to let me see him in the sacred Host,) the very hair of my head stood quite on end, and methought I was even quite annihilated. What sentiment then ought so miserable a wretch, and so laden with abominations, as I am, and who have spent my life in so little fear of God, to find in herself, to see that she approaches to so great a majesty, when he is pleased that my soul should behold him? How shall this mouth of mine, which hath uttered so many words against this very Lord, presume to touch that most glorious body of his, so full of purity and sanctity? For the love which that divine countenance of so great beauty, tenderness and affability discovers to us, doth more afflict and wound the soul, for that she hath no better served him, than doth that fear and terror, which is struck into her by the majesty she beholds in him.

But what then should I feel in myself, at two several times, when I have seen this of which I shall here speak? Going one day to receive the blessed Sacrament, I saw two devils, with the eyes of my soul, more clearly than if I had seen them with the eyes of my body, in a most abominable figure; who seemed with their horns to encompass the neck of the poor priest. I saw also my Lord, with that great majesty, of which I have spoken, placed in the hands of that priest, in the Host, which he was going to minister to me, with the same sinful hands of his, (for such they manifestly appeared to be) and I understood that soul to be then in the state of mortal sin. Now what a kind of sight must it be, to behold thy beauty, O my Lord, in the midst of so abominable shapes?

shapes? Those devils stood as all amazed, and affrighted at thy presence, and willingly would have gone from thence, if they could have gotten thy leave. This gave me such an excessive trouble, that I was scarce able to communicate; and I was in great fear, as conceiving that if it had been a vision from God, his divine Majesty would not, at such a time, have permitted me to see this, that I might understand what power and force the *words of consecration* have; since God would not be kept from thence, how wicked soever the priest were who pronounced them; and that I might also discern his great goodness, in not forbearing to put himself even into the hands of his enemy, and this for the good both of me, and of all men. I also understood sufficiently (on this occasion) how much more *priests* are obliged to be virtuous than other men, and how terrible a thing it is, to take the most holy Sacrament unworthily; and how absolute a lord the devil is of a soul, which is in mortal sin. This passage did me a great deal of good, and gave me a most particular knowledge of my great obligation to God: may he be blessed for ever and ever.

"Another time there happened to me another thing which amazed me extremely. I was in a certain place, where a person died, who had lived very ill for many years, but for the two last years had been sick, and in some things seemed to be reformed. This man died without confession, but still it did not seem to me that he should be damned. But whilst they were preparing the body for burial, I saw many devils take the corpse; and they seemed as it were to play with it, and to use divers cruelties upon it, which struck me with great terror, for with certain great hooks they tore it, and tossed it from one to another. When afterwards I saw him carried to be buried, with all the pomp and ceremonies which are allowed

allowed to others, I considered the goodness of God in not permitting the soul even of that man to be defamed, but that it should be concealed that he was an enemy of his. During all the time of the office for the dead, I saw not any devil, but when afterwards they put the body into the grave, there stood such a multitude of them within, ready to receive the body, that I was even beside myself to see it, and there was need of no little courage to dissemble it; and I considered how those devils were like to treat that soul, when they exercised such tyranny over the poor body. I would to God that this dreadful spectacle which I saw, had also been seen by such as are in mortal sin, for methinks it must have been a great motive to make them mend their lives.

"And now since I have begun to speak of visions which have relation to the dead, I will also declare some other things, concerning souls which our Lord hath been pleased that I should see. They brought me the news of the death of one who had been *provincial* here, but when he died he was *provincial* of another province. Now I had communicated much with him, and had been obliged to him for some good offices which he had done me, and he was endued with many virtues. When I knew that he was dead, I was greatly troubled at it, because I was in fear for his salvation, in regard that he had been a superior twenty years, which is a thing I much fear, as holding it to be a matter full of danger, to have charge of souls. I went therefore in great trouble to an *oratory* to pray for his soul; and I gave him all that good which I had ever done in my whole life, which was little enough; and so I humbly besought our Lord that his merits might supply what that soul needed towards the freeing it out of purgatory. And whilst I was begging this of our Lord, in the best manner I could, methought he rose up from some deep part of the earth,

earth, on my right side, and so I saw him ascend to heaven with very great joy. He was very old before he died, but he now seemed to be about the age of thirty years, or rather somewhat less, but with much brightness in his face. The vision passed away very speedily, but yet I was so extremely comforted by it, that the death of this man put me now to no more grief, though many others were troubled about him, for he was very well beloved. This happened but fifteen days after his death, and I came afterwards to understand, that the death which our Lord granted him, was of so great edification, that it astonished all to see such knowledge of himself, and tears, and humility as he expressed, when he died.

"A nun died in our house, who had been a great servant of God; and whilst we were reciting for her soul the office of the dead in the quire, methought I saw the soul rise up from the same side as the other did, and so go to heaven. This happened about a day and a half after her death.

"Another religious woman, between eighteen and twenty years of age, died in my house. She had been always sickly, and a great servant of God, very diligent in the quire, and a very virtuous woman. I thought certainly that she should not have gone to *purgatory* at all, in regard of the many sicknesses which she had endured, but rather that these would have been supernumerary merits. But yet when we were reciting the office, about four hours after she died, I perceived that her soul sprung up out of the same place, and went to heaven.

"I was one day at mass in a church of the fathers of the Society of Jesus, oppressed at that time with those great afflictions and troubles, of which I have spoken elsewhere, and in such a condition, that methought I was not able so much as to entertain one good thought.

Now there died that night a brother of the Society, of that same house, and mass was then saying for the repose of his soul; and whilst I was recommending him to God the best I could, I fell into a very great rapture, and I saw him go up to heaven with much glory, and our Lord himself, by way of particular favour, accompanying him.

"Another friar of our Order, a very good man, was very dangerously sick, and I being then at mass, was in a great recollection, and saw him departing out of this world, and that he went immediately to heaven, without touching upon purgatory at all; and he died, as I was afterwards told, at that very hour that I saw him. I wondered that he had escaped *purgatory*, but was given to understand, that he having been a religious man, and having well observed the vows of his profession, the bulls of indulgences granted in favour of his Order, had availed him towards his exemption from purgatory. Which, I suppose, was signified to me, as implying that more is required to the making a religious man, than the bare wearing of the habit.

"I will relate no more of these things, as I see no necessity for it, though yet our Lord has done me the favour to shew me very many. But amongst all those souls which I have seen, I have not understood of any one which escaped the going to purgatory, but only this last father, and that holy man, Father Peter of Alcantara, and another holy man of the order of St. Dominick, (Father Peter Ivagnez) our Lord hath also been pleased to let me see the several degrees of heavenly glory to which they have been raised, the places being represented to me wherein they are; and I find there is a great deal of difference between some and others.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XIX.

A relation of other miraculous graces and sublime visions, with which she is favoured by our Lord.

"I WAS once," says the Saint, chap. xxxv. "very "importunate with our Lord, that he would be pleased to restore sight to a certain person, to whom I had great obligations, who was almost grown quite blind; and I feared, in regard of my sins, that our Lord would not hear my prayer. He appeared to me then, as he had done at other times, and began to shew me the wound of his left hand; and with his right hand, he drew out the great nail which had been fastened in it: and me-methought that some of the very flesh came out with the nail, by which it was apparent how great pain it had caused him; and the sight of it pierced my heart with grief. He told me, that since *he had endured that for my sake, I should not doubt but that he would more willingly grant this request of mine, and so he promised me that I should ask him nothing that he would not do; for he knew already that I would beg nothing of him, but what should be for his glory, and that he would do this thing, which I now petitioned for. He bade me also to consider, that even when I did not serve him, I had not desired any thing of him which he had not granted, even better than I knew how to ask; and therefore how much more would he do it now, when he knew I loved him? And therefore that I should not doubt of this:* and I think eight days did not pass, before our Lord restored sight to that person. This my ghostly father was acquainted with immediately when it happened.

"Another time there was a person sick of a very painful infirmity, which because I know not of what kind

it was, I forbear to particularize here; but it was a very insupportable thing, and he had been troubled with it two months, and endured a torment by it, which did even tear him to pieces. Now my ghostly father went to visit him, and he had great compassion on him, and told me, that by all means I must also go and see him, for he was my kinsman. I went, and had so much pity of him, that I began to beg his health of our Lord, in a very importunate manner. And in this I saw clearly, by all that I can imagine,, the favour our Lord was pleased to do me therein, for instantly upon the next day he was quite well of his pain.

"I was once in great trouble, because I knew a certain person, to whom I was much obliged, was resolved to do a thing which was greatly against the honour of God, and his own, and yet he was very much bent upon it. My affliction on this occasion was very great, because I knew not which way to find any remedy to make him leave it, and it seemed to me that there was none. I besought God therefore very heartily to apply one, and went to a certain hermitage a little remote, where there was a picture of Christ at the pillar, beseeching him to do me that favour. When, behold, I heard a most sweet voice speaking to me, formed, as if it had been in the manner of whistling. Upon this I was extremely afraid, and I had a great desire to hear what it said to me, but could not, for it passed suddenly. When once my fear was gone (which was also quickly) I remained with such a quiet and joy, and so great an interior delight, that it amazed me to see, how the only hearing of a voice (and that with my corporal ears, and without the understanding of any word) was able to produce so powerful an operation in the soul. I perceived thereby that the thing which I had asked should be done, and my solicitude about it was utterly removed

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upon the very spot, as much as if I had seen it actually done, as it was afterward. And I related the whole thing to my confessors, who at that time were two, and they both were very learned men and servants of God.

"I knew also of a certain person who had resolved to serve God very seriously, and he had used mental prayer for some time, and therein his divine Majesty had done him many favours; and yet he gave over his course of prayer upon certain occasions which fell in his way, and he did not quit them, though they were full of danger. This put me in great affliction, because the person was one whom I loved much, and whom I also was much obliged to love. I believe it was more than a month, in which I did almost nothing else, but beg of God that he would bring this soul back to himself. At the end of which time, being in prayer one day, I saw a devil hard by me, with certain papers in his hands, which he was tearing, and he seemed to be in a very great rage. This gave me much comfort, because I conceived thereby that my request was granted; and so it was, as I came to know afterward; for the party had been at confession, which he had made with great contrition; and he returned in so very good earnest to God, that I hope in his divine Majesty, he will ever go on advancing in his service. Let him be blessed for ever: *Amen*.

"In this particular of our Lord's bringing souls out of grievous sins, upon my humble suit, and bringing others many times to more perfection, and freeing souls out of purgatory, and doing other extraordinary things, the favours of our Lord have been so numerous, that I should both weary myself and my reader, if I would pretend to relate them. And this hath happened oftener to me for the benefit of souls than of bodies, of which there are now many witnesses. At the first it gave me

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a great deal of scruple, because I could not help believing that our Lord was pleased to do divers things in consideration of my prayer; but there are now so many particulars, and so well known by others, that I have no scruple to believe this; and I bless his divine Majesty for the same, and it puts me to confusion, inasmuch as I find myself to be still more and more his debtor, and in my opinion it makes my desire to serve him increase, and it revives my love. And (which yet amazes me more) those things which our Lord finds not to be convenient, I cannot, though I would, beg them of him, at least in that manner, and with that fervor and importunity, as I do those other things.

Being once very unquiet and troubled, so as not to be able to recollect myself, and moreover being engaged in a battle and interior conflict, with my thoughts roving upon things not very perfect, and withal not seeming to myself to be so utterly untied from all things as I used to be; when I saw myself so wicked, I began to be afraid lest the favours which our Lord had done me might be illusions, and I remained with a very great obscurity. Whilst I was in this affliction, our Lord began to speak to me, and bade me not be thus disquieted, but that by finding myself in this case, I might understand how great a misery I should be in, if once he should depart from me; and that there was to be no security at all, as long as we live in this mortal flesh. I was also given to understand, how well our labour was employed in this conflict and war, since it would not fail to be crowned with so high a reward. Our Lord seemed to pity us, who live in this world; adding, that I must not think he had forgotten me, yea that he would never leave me, but yet so as that still I must do my part. And this he declared to me with a kind of tender compassion; and those other words also, which follow, his Majesty

jesty hath often said to me, with demonstration of great love. *Thou shalt now be mine, and I am thine.* And the words which I am wont to say, (and to my thinking, I say them with much truth) are these, *what care I, O Lord, for myself, but only for thee?*

" Sometimes there come upon me such vehement desires of receiving the blessed Sacrament, that I know not whether they can be expressed to the full. It happened to me one morning, that it rained so extremely, as to seem no ways fit for me to go out of doors. However being gotten abroad, I was so far transported with that desire of *communicating*, that although they had set spears against my breast, methought I could have passed through them all, and how much more through water. As soon as I came into the church I was taken with a great rapture; and methought the heaven was open, and I saw there a throne which hath been represented to me heretofore, (as I have told your Reverence) and above that another throne, upon which I understood, by way of a certain notice, which I am not able to express, that the Divinity did reside, though yet I saw it not. Methought this throne was upheld by certain living creatures, and I was considering whether they were not those of the Evangelists; but yet I neither saw how the throne was seated, nor who was sitting on it, but only a very great multitude of angels about it, which seemed to me of much more beauty than those others which I had formerly seen in heaven; and I have been thinking whether they might not be Seraphims or Cherubims, for they are very different from others in glory, and they seemed to be mightily enflamed. The glory which I then felt in myself, can neither be written nor spoken, nor is any one able to conceive it, but such as have been partakers of it. I understood that all that which can possibly be desired, was there united, and yet I saw nothing

thing. They told me (yet I know not who) that the thing which I could there do, was to understand that I could understand nothing, but see from thence the direct nothingness of all things, in comparison with that. And it is true, my soul was afterwards ashamed and confounded to observe that she was able to stay, or to pause at all upon any thing created; and how much more then to be affected by it; for all seemed to me no more than an ant-hill. I communicated, and staid out the mass, though I knew not how it could be so. I conceived the time to have been very short, and wondered, when the clock struck, to find that I had remained two hours in this rapture and glory.

"I was amazed after this, to see how by approaching to this fire, (which seemed to come from above, out of the true love of God) the old man of defects, and lukewarmness, and misery seems to be consumed, as I have read of the phœnix, out of whose ashes, when she is burnt, another springs up. For just so doth a soul (in this occasion) become another kind of thing, with desires wholly different, and with a courage so great, that now she seems not to be what she was before, but begins to walk with a new kind of purity in the way of our Lord. And as I was beseeching his divine Majesty, that it might prove to be so in my case, and that I might now at least begin anew to do him service, he spoke these words to me: *thou hast made a good comparison, and see that thou forget it not, that so thou mayest ever procure to improve thyself.*

"As I was once reciting St. Athanasius's Creed, I was given to understand the manner how there was one only God in three persons, and this in so perspicuous and clear a kind, that I was no less comforted than amazed at it. This also did me very much good, for increasing my knowledge concerning the greatness of God

God and his wonders. And now when I think of the most Holy Trinity, or hear any speech thereof, methinks I conceive how all that mystery stands very well, and it contents me much.

" One day upon the Assumption of our Blessed Lady, the Queen of the Angels, our Lord was pleased to do me the favour, in a certain rapture, that her exaltation to heaven was represented to me, together with the solemnity and joy of that celestial court, wherewith she was received; as also the place which she holds. To tell what kind of thing this was, I am no way able. The glory which my spirit had, to see that hers is so great, was extreme; and I remained with great effects and improvements by it, in the desire of undergoing yet greater afflictions here. and it also increased my devotion to this Blessed Lady, seeing her merit was so great.

" Being once in prayer, the joy and delight which I found in myself was so great, that knowing myself unworthy of so high a favour, I began on that occasion, to consider how much more I had deserved that place in hell, in which I had seen myself. And now by means of this consideration, my soul began to be much more enflamed, so that my spirit grew to be in a rapture, and in such a manner as I know not how to express: for methought I was put and plunged into that Majesty, which I had formerly understood. In this Majesty I was given to understand a certain truth, which is the accomplishment of all truth. I know not how to relate it, for I saw nothing. But these words were said to me, though yet I saw not who spoke them, only I knew that it was the same *truth. This which I do for thee is no small matter, but a thing for which thou owest me much; because all the mischiefs which befal the world, proceed from not knowing the truths of Scripture with clear truth; one tittle thereof shall not fail.* Now as for me,

me, I conceived that I had always believed this, yea and that all the faithful also believed it. But then he said to me again: *Ah! daughter, how few love me according to truth! For if they did, I would not conceal my secrets from them. Dost thou know what it is to love me according to truth? It is to know that all is a lie, which is not acceptable to me. Thou shalt see this clearly, (which now thou dost not understand) by the profit which thy soul shall get.* And so accordingly have I seen it performed, our Lord be praised. For all things which are not referred to the service of God, do of late seem to me so hugely to be vanity and a lie, that I am no way able to express it, as I understand it, *&c.* By this I was benefited in many kinds, of which I will here relate some, for many others I cannot.

"Our Lord here said to me a word of very great favour, though I know not also how this was, (for I saw nothing) but I remained in such manner after it, as I know not also how to declare, with exceeding great fortitude, and a firm purpose of accomplishing, even the least article of the divine Scripture, with all my power. And nothing, methinks, could offer itself to me, through which I would not pass, for the making this good.

"There remained also a truth of this divine Truth, which was here represented to me (though without my knowing how or what) so deeply engraven in my heart, that it makes me bear a new kind of reverence to God. For it imparts a notice of his majesty and power after such a manner as cannot be described; I can only understand that it is a mighty kind of thing. I remained also with a very great desire never to speak but of things really true, and which advance beyond all that which is treated of here in this world; and so I began to find it pain enough to live in it. This vision left me with a great

great tenderness, delight and humility, and I had no suspicion at all that it was an illusion. I saw nothing, but yet I understood the great benefit there is in not making account of any thing which brings us not nearer to God; and what a thing it is for souls to walk in Truth, in the presence of the same Truth, for our Lord gave me to understand that he is very Truth itself.

"I understood very great truths of this Truth, and better than if many learned men had taught me; at least it seems to me, that they could by no means have so imprinted them in my mind, nor so clearly have given me to understand the vanity of this world. This Truth of which I speak, was manifested to be Truth in itself, and to be both without beginning and without end; and all other truths to depend upon this Truth, and all other loves upon this love, and all other greatnesses upon this greatness; though yet all this be delivered by me with much obscurity, in comparison of that clearness with which our Lord was pleased to impart it.

"Being once reciting the hours of the divine office, with all the rest of the nuns, my soul began to be suddenly recollected; and it seemed to me that it was like some clear and pure looking-glass, without having any thing either on the back, or on the sides, or above, or below, which was not all exceeding clear. And in the very center thereof, Christ our Lord was represented to me, just as I am wont to see him. It seemed to me that I saw him clearly in all the parts and portions of my soul, as in a looking-glass, and so also (though I know not how) this glass was all engraven, or set in our Lord himself, with such an enamoured communication of himself, as I cannot express. Now this vision hath been of very great benefit to me, every time that I remember it, and especially after receiving the blessed sacrament. It was given me hereby to understand, that the soul's being in

mortal

mortal sin, is like covering this glass with a great cloud, and making it become very dark; so that though our Lord be ever present with us, (and so present as thereby to give us our very being,) yet then he is not so represented or seen in us. And that when any turn heretics, then the looking-glass is, as it were, directly broken, which is far worse than to be obscured. But now there is a very great deal of difference between my seeing this, and my relating it; for it is no easy thing to give it well to be understood. Yet this hath done me a great deal of good, and hath affected me with much pity and grief, for those times, wherein myself did obscure my soul in such sort as not to behold this Lord of mine. This vision seems also to be very useful to persons of recollection, to teach them a way of thinking of our Lord, as residing in the most interior part of their soul; which is a consideration that will stick closest to them, and be much more beneficial, than if he were considered as abroad out of the soul.

"Another time, when I was in prayer, there was suddenly represented to me, and that with all clarity, (though without my seeing any thing formed) how all things are seen in God, and how he holds them all in himself. To know how to set this down is not in my power, but it remained deeply imprinted in my soul; and it is one of the great favours that hath been done me by our Lord, yea and one of those also which hath put me to the greatest confusion and shame, when I considered the sins which I have committed against him. I believe that if our Lord had been pleased to let me see this vision at some other time; or if they could see it, who offend him, they would never dare to do as they do. Let us suppose the Divinity to be as some very bright diamond, much bigger than the whole universe; or else as some looking-glass, after the manner that I said before

fore of the soul, in that other vision, (only that this is in so sublime a manner that I am not able to express it,) and that all that we do is seen in this diamond; it being so great as to comprize all things within it, and nothing being able to get out of that greatness. It was a thing extremely amazing to see, in so very short a time, so many things joined all together here in this bright diamond; and also a matter of extreme affliction and grief to me, (and is so every time I remember it) to see that things so very ugly and foul as my sins were, should be represented and shewed in that so great clearness of light. And the truth is, that whensoever I remember it, I know not how I can endure it; and I did at that time remain so extremely confounded and ashamed, that methought I could not tell where to hide my head. O that some or other were able to make this truth to be well understood by those who commit very dishonest and filthy sins; that so they might come to know that they are not hidden, and that God hath reason to be very sensible of those wrongs, since they are acted so truly in the presence of his divine Majesty, and that we carry ourselves with so base an irreverence before him. I saw here also how justly hell is deserved by any one mortal sin, because it is past our power to understand, what a most heinous thing it is to commit any such crime in the presence of so great a majesty; and what an unspeakable distance is found between that which he is (his infinite goodness and perfection), and that which our sins are, (infinitely odious and abominable in his sight.) His mercy also appears hereby so much the more, since notwithstanding we know all this, he still endures us. It hath also made me consider, that if such a vision as this can leave the soul so extremely astonished and confounded, what will the day of judgment prove, when this majesty of our Lord will shew itself clearly to us, and

when

when we shall see (in their true colours) the offences which we have committed against him.

"Being once in prayer, in very great recollection, with much suavity and quiet, methought I was all encompassed with angels, and very near to God; I began to beseech his divine Majesty for the church: and I was given to understand the great good which a certain Order should do in the world in these latter times, and the great courage wherewith the members thereof should defend and hold up the faith.

"Being once praying near the blessed sacrament, there appeared to me a certain saint, whose Order was in some decay. He had a great book in his hands, which he opened, and bade me to read certain letters in it, which were great, and very legible. Now what was there written was this: *In future times this Order shall flourish, and have many martyrs.* Another time being at matins in the quire, six or seven persons were represented to me, (who appeared to be of the same Order) with swords in their hands. I conceive that by this it was given to understand, that they should defend the faith, &c. I have seen this glorious saint divers times, and he hath told me some things, and hath given me thanks for the prayers which I make for his Order, and hath promised to recommend me to our Lord. I specify not the several Orders here, lest others should be offended at it; if our Lord please to have them known, he may declare them. But every Order should procure, and every particular man of every Order, that by his means our Lord may make his Order so happy, that in so great a necessity as this, in which the church is at this time, they may be able to serve him. Happy are those lives which are spent in this cause!

"A certain person desired me once to pray to God, that he might understand, whether it would be for his service

service that he should accept of a bishoprick. I did so, and after I had received the holy communion, our Lord made me this answer: *When he shall understand with all truth and clearness, that true dominion consists in possessing nothing, then he may accept of it.* Giving thereby to understand, that whosoever is to be a prelate, must be very far from desiring or seeking it, or at least from procuring it.

" These favours, and many others also have been, and and are still very ordinarily shewed by our Lord to this sinful woman, which, methinks, are not necessary to be related; since by those which are delivered already, my soul, and the spirit which our Lord hath given me, may be understood. Let him be for ever blessed, who hath had so great care of me.

" He told me once, by way of comforting me, that I should not afflict myself, (and this he uttered with most tender love) for that in this life we could not possibly be always after the same manner; but that sometimes I should have fervour, and other times be without it, sometimes with unquietness and temptations, and sometimes in quietness and peace: but that I must ever trust in him, and fear nothing.

" I was once in prayer, and the hour of our going to rest was come, and I found myself in great pains, and expected then to have my ordinary fits of vomiting; observing therefore myself so tied up, as it were, whilst the spirit on the other hand desired to have some time for itself, I began to be greatly afflicted, and to weep much. Whilst I was in this affliction our Lord appeared to me, and gave me great comfort, and told me that I must go through these things, and endure all for the love of him, for *that my life was* necessary yet. And so methinks I never see myself now in any great pain, which I value, since I have resolved to serve this Lord and comforter of

mine

mine with all my power; for though he has permitted me to suffer a little, yet he has so comforted me withal, that I esteem not myself to do much in desiring to suffer afflictions for his sake. So that now it seems to me there is no reason why I should live but only to suffer, and accordingly this is the thing which I beg with most affection of God. Sometimes I say to him with my whole heart: *Lord either to die or to suffer, I beg no other thing of thee for myself.* It comforts me also to hear the clock strike, for so, methinks, I draw a little nearer to the seeing of God, since one hour more of my life is past. At other times I find myself in such sort, that I neither relish my life, nor yet methinks, desire death, but remain with a kind of tepidity and darkness in all things; for, as I have said, I have many times great troubles. And now since our Lord was pleased that those favours should be publicly known, which his Majesty has vouchsafed to shew me, (as he himself some years ago told me they should be, which gave me affliction enough, for every one understands them as he lists) I comfort myself that it hath not been my fault, because I never spoke of any such thing, but either to my ghostly fathers, or those others, who, as I knew by them, had been informed thereof; for of this I was very wary, even to extremity, not so much out of humility, as in regard to the difficulty that I had (as I have said) to tell even my ghostly father of these things. Now, glory be to God, howsever there be some who murmur at me very much, and perhaps with a good zeal; others, who are afraid to treat with me, yea and even to take my confessions, and others say also many other things of me; yet since I understand that it hath pleased our Lord, by this means to bring many souls to his service (as I have seen very clearly) and remember continually how much himself would endure for the gaining of one soul, I am very

little troubled about it. I would make much more account that any one soul should have profited, though never so little, in God's service, by my means, than of all which can be said of me; for now our Lord hath been pleased that all my desires should terminate in this (*viz.* the salvation of souls.) And he hath also given me even a kind of sleep in this life, which makes it seem to me that what I see here is but a dream; nor am I able to say that I perceive in myself either much contentment or trouble from the things of this life. If some things give me any, it passes away with so great speed, that I even wonder at it, and it leaves no other impression than as of a thing of which I had dreamed. And it is a perfect truth, that although I should afterwards have a mind, either to be glad at any contentment, or sorry at any affliction, it is no more in my power, but just as any discreet person might receive trouble or joy from a dream. For now our Lord hath been pleased to awaken me, and free my soul from all that, which through my not being truly mortified, nor dead to the things of this world, made me heretofore to resent such things. His Majesty be pleased that I now become blind no more.

"In this sort, Sir, do I live now, and I beseech your Reverence, my good father, to beg of God, that he will either take me to himself, or give me means to serve him, &c." So the holy mother, in the last chapter of the account she gave, by obedience, of her own life; the occasion of which we shall now declare.

CHAPTER XX.

The holy mother is commanded to write an account of her life, and of the favours she receives from God in her prayer; some observations on her writings; father Avila's letter to her.

"THE holy mother Teresa," (says Dr. Yepez, bishop of Tarrasona, sometime her confessor, in his eighteenth chapter of the third book of her life, "besides many loose papers, wherein are found things of much profit and spirit, wrote * five books, none of her own head, or for her own pleasure, but all out of obedience to her confessors, whom she obeyed with the same exactness as God himself. The first book was *a discourse and relation of her life.* And because some ignorant persons, and inexperienced in the spiritual way, have scrupled at the saint's writing her own life; and in it so much of the celestial favours shewn to her, and of her own virtues, (not considering that she being so very good, and obliged also to speak the truth, how much soever she desired to discover only her faults, could not but manifest her virtues also; and being to recount the revelations and favours which our Lord did her, and the effects they caused in her soul, could not omit the writing somewhat of the rare perfections and graces that were lodged in it.) To these I say, that the holy mother did all this on meer

* The other four books, written by the holy mother were 1. *The way of perfection.* 2. *The history of her foundations.* 3. *Conceptions of the love of God, upon the Canticles:* of which there remains but a small part. And 4. *The castle of the soul,* or *the mansions.* Besides which there are also extant some lesser works of hers: such as, *Seven meditations on the Lord's Prayer. Exclamations of divine love. Hymns* of the same. Divers *Spiritual letters.* Her *Constitutions.* Her *Advices to her nuns.* And a treatise of the *Manner of visiting their monasteries,* Not to speak of some other papers, which we shall insert in the history of her life.

meer necessity and by constraint. For she being truly humble and prudent, proceeded (as in the first book we have expressed more at large) in such an excess of favours, which she received from God, with a suspicion and fear lest she should be deluded by the devil, which never let her rest. And this our Lord certainly so ordained, that her spirit might be more known in the world, and might pass through a stricter scrutiny, and find a greater approbation. On the other side, her confessors likewise, (especially after that for some years she began to have these things) though they were learned and prudent men, and saw in the mother all the marks that the Spirit of God caries along with it; yet as these favours were so very rare and extraordinary, did not rely on their own opinion and judgment, but knowing that father doctor Avila, a man of much spirit, experience, and wisdom for discerning spirits was then living at Andalusia, Father Garzia de Toledo, then her confessor, and Don Francisco Soto de Salazar, afterwards bishop of Salamanca, one of the inquisitors, that then passed through Avila, advised her to make a relation of her life, in which she should give an account with all clarity of whatsoever passed in her soul, and send it to Andalusia to that holy man. See here the end she had in writing her own life, without ever then imagining that it should be seen by any other, but her confessor, and the party that was to examine it. Yea the holy mother then thought it to be so secret, that in part she reduced it to the seal of the sacrament of penance; and so she therein declared, that she permitted him not to shew to any person, more than the first chapters of her life, in which she writ down her faults, and the vanities she had lived in, and desired his secrecy touching the favours God had done her. This was her design, but God's was quite different; for by this means he was pleased to bring to

light the treasures he had deposited in that holy soul: for presently as soon as the excellency of her spirit came to be known, and the light and clarity of her doctrine was perceived, and the great benefit it might do in the church, her life grew by little and little to be divulged, and, without her knowledge, many copies, while she yet lived, were taken of it. Afterwards her confessors commanded her to add to it, the account of the foundation of St. Joseph at Avila, (at which time she revised the whole, adding divers things, and dividing it into chapters,) for the relation which she sent to father Avila, was short, and was made before this foundation. When the holy mother was dead, presently this book waa printed, having first been many years detained, and examined by the court of the inquisition, to which it had been delivered in the saint's life-time, and at her request, by father Dominic Bannez, her confessor. This book was finished in June, anno 1562, the same year that she founded the first monastery at Avila."

This book therefore she wrote, constrained by many obligations, but not without manifestations also, of the will and commandment of our Lord, as we clearly gather from what she writes in the introduction. "I make this relation," says she, "which my confessors have enjoined me, and which, to my knowledge, our Lord himself desired of me long since, but I durst not undertake. In writing this, as well as the rest of her works, her mind," says the bishop of Tarrasona, was so absorpt in God, that though there was a great noise in her cell, it did not disturb her, or make her sensible thereof. She wrote being full of business, and going to the quire as duly as the rest, and she wrote with great speed: it seems she had a mine in her head, from whence issued out words so well tempered, and fitted to what she was to utter, that though she wrote so many leaves, she never stood

stood to consider any of the things she was to write, for the Spirit dictated to her in such abundance, that had she had many hands, she could have employed them all, and have tired them, and yet not have wanted matter. In the originals written with her own hand, there is not found one word cancelled, corrected or mistaken; which, had it been in the copying a thing printed, would have been remarkable. But to be done at the first hand, and upon a subject so sublime, and with so agreeable and ordinary a stile, seems to me one of the greatest miracles recorded of the Saint, and the greatest testimony of that light and wisdom which the Holy Ghost had infused into her. More especially as this holy woman had before been very rude and ignorant, as to the understanding explaining things spiritual and mystical, and no ways curious to learn them. And very wonderful it was that when she wrote the book of her life, and came to treat on those degrees of supernatural prayer, which she there describes, as she went ascending from one degree to another, our Lord put her at the same time actually into that kind of prayer, and together with the experience that she had, gave her a promptness and felicity in expressing it, furnishing her with comparisons very pertinent, the better to explain it."

To these observations of the bishop of Tarrasona, Mr. Woodhead, in the preface to his translation of her works, adds, " that her frequent digressions to other discourses, that seemed any way beneficial, though foreign to that primarily intended; the often interposing other devotions, ejaculations and colloquies with our Lord, to which she gave way, (obeying as it were the present motions of the spirit, whatever way it carried her, and not able readily to break her habit of prayer) the prolix parentheses, that here and there are found in her writings, as if she had no time to choose another place for them;

them; and her often iterated apologies for those surprises of herself, do shew that neither her matter nor her method was curiously predesigned, and that her pen was *calamus scribæ velociter scribentis, (the pen of a scriviner who writeth swiftly.* Ps. 44.) a scribe of whom she had not the perfect mastery, which also sometimes she herself, but very modestly, intimates.

In the conclusion of the discourse of her life, she thus addresses herself to her ghostly father: "May the divine Majesty grant that what I have written here, may be of some benefit to your Reverence. I have not done it wishout some trouble, in regard to the little leisure and conveniences which I had; but happy shall this trouble be, if I hit right in any thing said, and if our Lord shall receive some one only act of praise by occasion thereof: for I shall esteem myself hereby fully paid, though your Reverence should burn it all immediately after. May his Majesty keep your Reverence, and hold you in his hand, and make you so great a saint, that you may with spirit and light enlighten and direct this miserable creature, who hath so little of the humble, and so much of the bold, as to have presumed to write of such high things. God grant that I have not erred therein, whilst my aim and desire was to do my best and to obey, and that our Lord might be praised in something by my means, which is the suit I have made to him, now these many years. And since I wanted work for this purpose, I have ventured and presumed to put in order this irregular and confused life of mine, though yet without bestowing on it any more attention or time, than what was necessary for writing of it; and so setting down those things which have occurred concerning me, and passed in me, with all the plainness and truth that I was able. It would not be amiss to exaggerate to your Reverence this service of mine, the more to oblige you to take particular care to

recommend

recommend me to God. And this I might well do, since it hath cost me so very dear, to see myself thus set down in writing, and to have brought, by occasion thereof, so many miseries to my remembrance. Though I can affirm with truth, that I have not more reluctance in declaring the favours which our Lord hath done me, than the offences which I have committed against his divine Majesty. I have done what your Reverence hath commanded me, in the enlarging myself in this discourse, yet upon condition that you will also do what you promised me, in tearing whatsoever you should dislike. I beseech your Reverence to correct it, and to get it transcribed, if it must be sent to father Avila, for else perhaps some may know the hand. I desire very much that he may see it, since I began to write it with that intention. For if he judgeth that I walk in a good way, I shall be very much comforted. Your Reverence do in all things as you think fit, and consider that you are obliged to one that trusts her soul in your hands after so confident a manner. As for yours, I will recommend it to our Lord all the days of my life; and therefore make great haste to serve his Majesty, to the end you may be able to do me a favour with him: since your Reverence will easily see (by that which is here sent you) how well you are employed in bestowing yourself wholly, as you have begun, on him who gives himself to us without any reserve at all. Let him be blessed for ever. For I hope in his mercy, that both you and I shall see ourselves one day, where we shall discern more clearly the great mercies he hath been pleased to shew us both, and may praise him to all eternity. *Amen.*"

This relation of her life was sent, as the holy mother desired, to father Avila, (that most holy priest and apostolic preacher, whose life has been written by father Lewis of Granada) to Montiglia in Andalusia, where he then

resided; who, after the perusal of it, returned an answer, published amongst his spiritual letters, of which the following is an abstract, or rather a copy.

" *The grace and peace of Jesus Christ be ever with you.*

" When I received the book sent to me, it gave me occasion to think, not so much of my being a competent judge of the matters contained therein, as that through the mercy of our Lord, I might reap some benefit to myself by the doctrine of it; and I thank Christ, that having now read it, though I am in this latter regard much comforted, without meddling with the other; yet the respect I owe to the business, and to the person recommending it to me, seems not to permit that I should forbear to say something of my opinion of it at least in general.

" The book, as it now is, ought not to pass through the hands of many, because the expressions in it in some places want correcting, and in others explaining; and there are other things that to your spirit may be beneficial, and yet would not prove so to others, that should follow them; because particular ways, whereby God conducts some, suit not others. And these, or the greatest part of them, are here marked out by me, to put in order, and make them ready to send them to you hereafter, when I shall be able, and shall find an opportunity. At the present, if you saw my infirmities, and my other necessary employments, I believe they would move you rather to compassionate, than to blame me as negligent.

N. B. *That it was the first copy of her life, which was perused by father Avila; and we are not to doubt but the expressions which he marked out, as wanting correction or explanation, or otherwise improper to come into*

into the hands of many, were all either corrected or omitted in the second copy which she wrote, after the foundation of her first monastery.

"The doctrine concerning prayer, (as the holy man goes on in his letter) is for the most part good, and you may very well acquiesce in it, and follow it; and in the raptures, I find the signs which those have that are true. The manner of God's teaching a soul, without the imagination, and without interior words, is safe, and I find nothing in it to scruple at, and St. Austin speaks very well of it.

"The interior speeches have deceived many in our days, and the external are less secure. The perceiving that they are not of one's own spirit, is an easy matter; the discerning whether they be from a good or bad spirit, is harder. There are divers rules given, for knowing whether they are from God; and one is, if they are spoken in a time of need, or for some great benefit, &c. For if a good man speaks not words which are not well weighed, much less doth God. And this being considered, and that the words spoken are consonant to the divine Scripture and to the doctrine of the church, it seems to me that those in the book are from God.

"Those visions that are imaginary, (that is, represented by an image imprinted in the imagination) or seen by the corporal eyes, are those that are more doubtful, and such as those ought by no means to be desired, but avoided as much as possible; yet not by making signs of contempt, unless when it is certainly known to be an evil spirit. Persons ought to beseech our Lord not to conduct them by the way of seeing, but that the happy sight of him and of his saints may be reserved for heaven, and that here he would conduct them by the plain, beaten road, by which he guides his faithful;

ful: and by other good means they ought to endeavour the shunning of those things. But if doing all this, the vision continue, and the soul reaps profit thereby, and the seeing of them gives no occasion to vanity, but to a greater humility; and if that which is spoken (by these persons seen) is agreeable to the doctrine of the church; and if it continues thus a long time, and with a certain inward satisfaction of the soul, (which is better enjoyed than expressed) there is no cause for the avoiding them: though in this matter no one ought to rely on his own judgment, but forthwith communicate it to one that may give him light. And this is the universal remedy that must be used in all those things, and to hope in God, who, if there be humility to submit to the opinion of another, will not suffer a soul to be deceived, that desires to be secure.

"And none is to fear, or immediately to blame these things, because the person on whom he sees them conferred, is not perfect; since it is no new thing to the goodness of our Lord, out of bad men to make good, and even out of heinous sins to extract great blessings, by giving to sinners very delicious relishes of himself, as I myself have seen. Who is he that shall set limits to the bounty of God, especially since such things as these, are not given for one's merit, or for one's being stronger, nay rather are given to some for their being weaker? And as they make not always a person more holy, so are they not always given to persons more holy.

"Neither have they reason, who will not give credit to these things, because they are so very high; as thinking it incredible that the infinite majesty of God should abase himself to such an amorous communication with his creature. It is written that *God is love*, (1 John, iv. 18.) and if love, a love infinite, and a goodness infinite. Now it is no wonder for infinite love and goodness, to shew

shew such excesses of love, at which they are troubled who know it not; and though many know it by faith, yet the particular experience of the affectionate, and more than affectionate converse of God with whom he pleases, (if not hindered) cannot be known thoroughly till this communication be obtained. Whereupon I have seen many scandalized at beholding the great acts of the love of God towards his creatures; and themselves being very far from experiencing the like, they never imagine that God doth to others what he doth not to t em: whereas it is reason, that because it is a work of love, and of a love that raises admiration, it should be taken for a mark that it is from God, since he is wonderful in his works; and much more in those of his mercy; such circumstances concurring as evidence that it is a good thing.

"Methinks, by that which appears in the book, you have resisted these things even more than there was occasion: methinks they have benefited your soul, and especially have made you to know your own misery and defects, and have helped you to amend them. They have continued a long time, and always with spiritual profit; they incite you to the loving of God, and despising yourself, and the doing penance. I do not see then why I should blame them; I incline more to think them good. Yet so that caution be ever used, not to rely wholly upon them, if it be a thing unusual, or any thing be bid to be done that is singular, and not very plain and easy. In all these, and the like cases, one must ever suspend belief, and presently ask counsel. Likewise let it be noted, that though these things be from God, yet others use to be intermingled by the enemy, and therefore one must always be suspicious. Also till it be known that they are from God, one ought not to trust much to them, since holiness consists only in having an humble love of God and of our neighbour; and these

other

other things (though good) one must value less, and place our whole study in the getting true humility, and the love of our Lord. It is likewise expedient not to adore these visions but only Jesus Christ in heaven, and to consider that which in my imagination is represented, but only as an image, to conduct me to him who is represented.

" I add, that the things spoken of in this book befall some persons, even in our days, and this with much assurance that they are from God, whose hand is not shortened, that it cannot do now, that which in former times it has often done, and that in weak instruments too; that so he may be glorified.

" Go on then in your way, but ever with a suspicion of thieves, and an enquiry after the right road. And I thank our Lord, who has given you his holy love, the knowledge of yourself, and a love of penance and the cross. For these other things do not much heed them; though neither must you contemn them, since there are signs that very many of them are from God, and those that are not such, by asking advice can do you no hurt. I cannot believe that I have written this by my own strength, for I have none: I suppose your prayer hath effected it. I beg of you for the love of Jesus Christ our Lord, to undertake the charge of praying to him for me. He knows I desire it upon urgent necessity, *&c.* Jesus be glorified by all and in all, *Amen.*

Your servant in Christ,

John d'Avila.';

F. Gratian (the holy mother's chief assistant) in his treatise concerning her books, adds that this same relation of her life, was sent also by her to St. Lewis Bertrand, then living at Valentia; and that he also having perused it, approved her spirit, as may be seen, says he,

in

in a letter, annexed to the life of the same blessed father And with this letter, and that of doctor Avila, 'the holy mother was calmed for the present, and left off her going about, so solicitous as she was wont, to seek some to examine her doctrine and spirit.'

CHAPTER XXI.

Other relations written by the holy mother, in which she gives an account of the state of her soul to some of her confessors.

BESIDES the narration of her life, there were found after the death of the Saint, some other papers, written for her confessors, in which are contained matters of great edification, which therefore have been usually published with her life. These appear to have been penned by her before the relation of her life, and soon after the time that she began entirely and seriously to devote herself to God; and his divine Majesty, on his part, began to shower down upon her his supernatural favours. And hereby we may see to what a perfection our Lord was pleased to bring her in a short space of time; from whence we may make also a further judgment of the eminence of that sanctity, to which she must at length have arrived, (increasing as she did every day more and more in the love of God) in the space of about two or three and twenty years, which she afterwards lived; since her very beginnings were such as to surpass the highest flights even of very perfect souls.

First Relation.

"1. The manner of my proceeding in prayer, which at

at present I observe, is this. It is very seldom that being in prayer, I am able to discourse with the understanding; because my soul presently begins to be recollected, and to remain in quiet, or in a rapture, so as not to be able to make any use of my senses except only my hearing, and this too without understanding what I hear.

"2. It often befals me, that without my intending to meditate on divine matters, nay, when I am treating of other things, and when methinks I could not be able to use mental prayer, how much soever I might endeavour it, by reason of my great aridity, my bodily pains also contributing thereto, this recollection and elevation of spirit seizeth me so suddenly, that I cannot avoid it: and I instantly enjoy the effects and benefits which it brings with it: and this without my having had any vision, or heard any thing, or even knowing where I am; only that when I imagine my soul to be lost, I see her all on a sudden possessed of such advantages, that though I would toil a whole year in the purchasing of, seems impossible for me to acquire: so exceedingly am I a gainer on these occasions.

"Sometimes certain very great impetuosities come upon me, with a desire of being consumed for God, which I cannot resist. I seem then to be about to die, so that it makes me cry out and call upon God, and this seizeth me with great violence. Sometimes I am not able to stand, or to sit still, these anguishes do so oppress me. Now this pain takes me, without my procuring it, and is such (so delightful) as that the soul with her good will would never be without it whilst she lives. The anxiety which I have on these occasions is how *not to live*; and that to my thinking, I live without hope of any remedy; since the remedy for seeing God

is

is death, and this I must not procure for myself. Besides my soul at these times conceives that all, except herself, are in a very comfortable condition, and that all of them find a remedy for their troubles. This so afflicts her, that unless our Lord helped her by some rapture (in which all is calmed, and the soul remains in a great quiet and well pleased, sometimes by seeing something of that which she desires, and other times by hearing internal speeches) it would be impossible to get out of this pain.

"4. Sometimes there come upon me certain desires of serving God, with impetuosities so vehement that I know not how to express them, and also a grief to see how unprofitable I am. It seems at these times that no labour, nor pain, could be presented to me, nor death, nor martyrdom, which I would not suffer with ease. Now this also befals me, without my using any consideration, or discourse of the understanding, and comes upon me in an instant, and totally overwhelms me, and turns me upside down; so that I know not from whence such extraordinary courage seizeth me. I would then methinks cry aloud, and give all to understand how much it concerns them, not to content themselves with mean things (in God's service) and how great a happiness that is which God will give us, if we dispose ourselves to receive it. These desires, I say, are so intense, that I am inwardly consumed, in seeing myself to will what I am not able to effect. Methinks this body holds me fast, that I am not fit to serve God in any thing; as also my condition, for did not these hinder me, I would be doing very heroic actions, as far as my strength permitted. So that upon seeing myself wholly unable to serve God, this pain afflicts me in such sort as I am not able to express: but it ends in delight, recollection and divine consolation.

"5. Sometimes

" 5. Sometimes it hath fallen out, that when these anxious desires of serving God come upon me, I have had a mind to do penance, but cannot. This would give me a great pleasure, and the penances which I perform at present, are delightful to me, though they are in a manner nothing, by reason of my weakness of body, which if I should be delivered from, I conceive, that, with these desires, I should be immoderate in point of penance.

" 6. Sometimes it is a great trouble to me to converse with any one, and it so afflicts me that it makes me weep exceedingly, for all my desire is to be alone, and even when I neither pray nor read, the very solitude comforts me. And especially the conversing with my kindred seems offensive to me, and I am as it were a slave when among them, except it be with such whom I treat with concerning matters of prayer, and of my soul; for discoursing with such, comforts and delights me, though sometimes I would fain not see them neither, but go where I might be quite alone; but this very seldom, for those with whom I treat about matters of my conscience, usually afford me singular consolation. At other times it troubles me that I must eat and sleep, and to see that I can, no more than any other, forego these things. I do it to serve God, and so I offer it up to him.

7. " All time seems too short to me, and that I want leisure enough to exercise mental prayer; for this I should never be weary of being alone. I always desire to have time to read, for to this I have ever been much affected. I read but a little at a time, because in taking up the book I am presently satisfied and recollected, so that my reading presently passeth into praying. Yet this lasts but a while, because I have many employments, which though good, do not yet delight me as this would. And thus I am ever desiring more time, which makes

every

every thing to be so distasteful and unsavoury to me; as I conceive, because I see that what I would have, and most desire, is not effected.

8. "All these desires and advancements in virtue hath our Lord bestowed upon me since he gave me this prayer of quiet and these raptures; and I find myself now so much improved, that methinks I was before a lost creature.

9. "These raptures and visions leave in me these benefits, which I will here relate; and I declare, if I have any good it hath proceeded from them.

10. "I have a very strong resolution of not offending God, no not venially; so that I would rather die a thousand times, than commit knowingly any such offence.

11. "I am resolved not to omit any thing that I think to be of greater perfection, and by which our Lord may be more served, (provided that my spiritual guide and director tell me so much) for any pain whatsoever, nor for any treasure in the world; and should I be otherwise disposed, I could not have the face to ask our Lord any thing, nor to make use of mental prayer, though in all this I commit many defects and imperfections.

12. "I yield obedience to my confessor, though with some imperfection; yet when once I know that he wills a thing, or that he enjoins me it, as far as I understand, I would not omit the doing it; and should I neglect it, I should think myself mightily deluded.

13. "I have a desire of poverty, though this likewise imperfect; but methinks did I possess vast treasures, I would not care to have any particular revenue or money for myself alone, I would only have necessaries. Yet I perceive I am very defective in this virtue; for though I desire not any thing for myself, yet I would have it to give away.

14. "When I see any thing fair and beautiful, as

water, fields, flowers, &c. or hear music and the like, methinks I would not see or hear them, there is so great a difference from what I use to see; and so my appetite to them is much abated, and I care so little for them that except it be some first motion, no other thought of them stays with me, and they seem meer dirt to me.

15. "If I talk or converse with secular persons (which sometimes cannot be avoided) though it be about matters of prayer, if the conversation be long, notwithstanding it may be in the time of recreation, unless the occasion be necessary, I offer a violence to myself; for it troubles me much.

16. "All matters of recreation and mirth, which I was wont to love, as also all things of the world, now displease me so, that I cannot patiently see or observe them.

17. "These desires of loving and serving God, and of seeing him, which, as I have said, I sometimes have, are not advanced with consideration and meditation, as when I had them formerly, when I seemed to myself very devout, and shed many tears, but with so enflaming and so excessive a fervor, that I say again, if God did not relieve me by some rapture (wherein the soul seems to rest satisfied and contented) methinks my life would presently be at an end.

18. "Those whom I see to be great proficients, and armed with strong resolutions, utterly disengaged, and truly courageous (in the way of God) I love exceedingly; and with such persons as these I would gladly converse, and methinks they help me forward. But persons whom I perceive to be timorous, and who seem to me to go groping, as it were, and in suspense, in matters which in all reason may be here done, methinks give me a disgust, and make me cry out to God and to the saints, who undertook and overcame these things

which

which now afright us. Not that I am good for any thing myself, but because I conceive God assists those who, for his sake, attempt great things; for he never fails such as trust in him alone. And I would fain meet with one that would help me in more firmly believing after this manner, and taking no care what to eat or what to wear, but to leave such things to God's providence.

Here was added (in the margin) written by the holy Mother's own hand.

" My meaning is not, that the leaving to God the providing me with necessaries, should be in such manner as not to endeavour at the procuring of them, but only not doing it with a solicitude which might disquiet me. And since our Lord hath given me this liberty, I have gone on well, and I labour to forget myself as much as I can. I think it is about a year since our Lord hath bestowed this upon me.

19. " Vain glory, God be praised, there is no reason that I know for me to have any; because I evidently see, that in these things which God gives, I contribute nothing of my own. Nay, God rather discovers to me (by these means) my own miseries; for with all I should be able to think on, I could not come to discern so many truths as I now understand, in a short space of time.

20. " When I speak of these things, they seem to me now to be, as if they were spoken of another person. Heretofore I thought it a shame that such things should be known concerning me; but now methinks I am not the better for this, but the worse, since I profit so little by so great favours. And indeed I conceive on every account, that there is not in all the world one worse than myself. The virtues of others seem to me much more

meritorious, and that for my part I do nothing but receive favours, and that God will give to others at once all that together, which he retails here to me. And I beseech him that he would not reward me in this life; and I believe God hath led me this way, because so weak and miserable.

21. "When I am in prayer, and even always almost, if I am able to meditate a little, I cannot, though I should endeavour it, ask of our Lord, nor desire rest, because I see he lived altogether in labours, which I beseech him to give me likewise, bestowing on me first the grace to sustain them.

22. "All matters of this kind, and of very high perfection, seem to be so imprinted in me in prayer, that I am astonished to behold so many and so manifest truths; the things of this world seem meer fooleries to me, and that it is an impertinence to grieve at deaths and other accidents of it, &c.

23. "If I see in some persons, things that apparently seem to be sins, I cannot absolutely conclude that they have offended God; and if my thoughts stay upon it a while, which is very little or nothing, I never determine in myself to make a certain judgment of the evil, though I perceive it to be evident; nay rather it appears to me that all have the same care of serving God, that I have. And herein his majesty hath done me a singular favour, that I never engage myself in an evil matter, so that afterward I remember it; or if I do remember it, I ever think on some virtue or other in the same person, so that such things do not trouble me: except it be general or public sins and heresies, for these often afflict me, and almost every time I think on them, I conceive this is the only calamity that is to be laid to heart. I am grieved also if I see any that formerly addicted themselves to mental prayer, fall off again. But though this

troubles

troubles me, it is not so much, because I strive against the entertaining of such thoughts.

24. "I find myself also amended as to the curiosities to which I was accustomed, though not entirely free; for I do not always perceive myself mortified herein, though I am sometimes.

25. "All this, that I have here said, is what ordinarily passeth in my soul, as far as I can understand, and the having my thoughts upon God is a thing very constant with me. Yea and though I am treating of other matters, without my procuring it, I know not who doth awaken me to call in my thoughts to God; and God be praised, such things (that is, other matters of how great importance soever) take up my thoughts only by intervals, and not continually.

26. "It befalls me sometimes, though this not so often (and it lasts for three or four, or five days) that methinks all good things, all fervors and visions are taken from me, yea erased out of my memory, in such manner that though I should have a mind to think of them, I know not that any good hath ever been in me; all seems a dream to me, at least I cannot remember any thing. At these times corporal pains torment me, many at once; my understanding is disturbed, so that I cannot think at all of God, neither know I under what law I live. If I read, I understand nothing, and methinks I am full of imperfections, and without any affection at all to virtue. The great courage which I use to have here appears to be lost; and methinks I am not in condition to resist the least temptation or detraction in the world. I then discern that I am good for nothing, and would fain hide myself where none might see me. I sustain this battery nevertheless, and God doth me this favour in it, that I do not offend him more than I am wont to do at other times; nor do I request him to take it away from

from me; but that if it be his pleasure, I may continue thus always, provided that he hold me in his hand, that I offend him not, and that I conform myself to him with all my heart: yea I conceive that he doth me a very great favour, in not keeping me continually in this state.

27. "One thing astonisheth me, that when I have been after this manner, upon one of those interior words which I use to hear, or one vision, or a little recollection, that lasts but for the space of an Ave Maria, or upon my approaching to the holy communion, both my soul and body are presently very quiet, and very sound, and my understanding is much cleared, and I remain with all that courage and those desires which I am wont to have, and of this I have good experience, for I find it so very often, at least when I receive the blessed Sacrament.

28. "All this which I have here related, makes me believe that these things, which happen to me, are from God. For I know what a one I was before, who was travelling in the way of perdition; and I now find myself enriched in a short space with virtues not gotten by labour, but given me without my understanding how, so that I did not know myself. And I perceive with all truth and clarity (and I am certain I am not deceived) that these things have not only been a means, by which God hath drawn me to his service, but also rescued me from hell, as my confessors know, who have taken my general confessions.

"When I see a person that knows any thing of me, I would fain make him understand my life; for methinks I am honoured when our Lord is praised, and I care for nothing else. This he knows very well, or I am very blind, that there is neither honour, nor life, nor glory, nor

nor any good of body or soul that can retain me; nor do I speak or desire my own interest, but only his glory. I cannot believe the devil would procure so many good things for the benefiting my soul, that so he might destroy me afterward; for I do not think him so silly. Nor can I imagine that God, though I for my sins deserve to be deceived, would reject so many fervent prayers of so many good men, as have been made for me within these two years: for I do nothing else but recommend myself to the prayers of all, that our Lord would let me know whether this be for his glory, otherwise that he would lead me some other way: and I do not believe his divine Majesty would suffer these things to go on still, if they were not from him. However I can easily imagine, that the devil sometimes may interpose in these cases, (as I have seen) but then he produceth very different effects; and a person that hath had some experience, will not, in my opinion, be deceived by him.

29. "Notwithstanding all this, I say that although I firmly believe that these things are of God, yet I would not for all the world do any thing thereupon, which he who hath the charge of my soul, did not think to be more for God's service: nor did I ever understand otherwise, but that I was to obey, and to see that I concealed nothing, for that this was expedient for me. I am very usually reproved for my defects, and so severely, that it pierceth my very entrails. I am also advertised when there is, or may be, any danger in the affairs that I have in hand; which thing hath been of great benefit to me, in bringing to my mind many times my former sins, and causing in me great compunction.

30. "I have here enlarged myself very much, but certainly in respect of the benefits I find in myself when I come out of prayer, methinks I am here too brief in them: afterwards I remain with many imperfections,

stand

without fruit, and very bad. Perhaps I do not understand what is good, but deceive myself; however the change of my life is very notorious. I refer all to the judgment of your Reverence, since you know my whole soul."

Second Relation.

31. "I conceive it is more than a year, since I wrote that which is above. All this while God hath held me by his hand, that I have not grown worse, but rather I perceive a great amendment in that which I shall now further relate. May he be praised in all and for all.

32. "My visions and revelations do not cease, but are rather more sublime. Our Lord hath taught me a manner of prayer, by which I find myself more improved, and with a much greater disengagement from the things of this life, and with more courage and liberty. My raptures are increased, for sometimes they come with such a force, and in such a manner, as that without my being able to help myself or to resist, it is outwardly perceived, and that too whilst I am in company; for it is of such a sort that it cannot be disguised: and although I greatly endeavour to resist it in the beginning, yet sometimes I cannot.

33. "As to what concerns poverty, it seems to me that God hath done me an exceeding great favour, for now I would not so much as have necessaries, except by way of alms; and therefore I very much desire to be where they live only on charity. Methinks that living where I am certain and secure of not wanting food and raiment, doth not fulfil in so great perfection my vow or the counsel of Christ, as where there is no revenue to live upon; for such sometimes will be in want. And the advantages gotten by true poverty are, methinks, so many,

many, that I would not by any means lose them. I find myself also endued with so great a faith, many times, in thinking that God can never be wanting to them that serve him, and that his words can never fail; that I cannot persuade myself otherwise, nor cannot fear. And so I am afflicted much, when people advise me to admit of and receive rents; and I have recourse to God who helps me.

34. "Methinks I have much more compassion for the poor than I was wont to have formerly. I have now a great pity towards them, and perceive in myself a great desire of relieving them; and if I were to follow my own inclination, I should give them the very cloaths that I wear. I have no abhorrence or aversion from them, though I dress or handle them; and this I plainly see is the gift of God, because though I formerly gave alms for his sake, yet I had not that natural tenderness towards the poor. In this I perceive a very manifest improvement.

35. "As to things said of me, by way of detraction, which are many and very prejudicial to me, I find myself likewise improved, methinks they make no more impression upon me than upon one that were quite stupid, and I think sometimes, yea almost always, that they have reason for what they say against me. I am so little affected with what they say, that methinks I have nothing therein to offer to God: for as I find by experience that my soul gains much thereby, it seems to me rather that they do me a great favour; so that upon the first occasion of betaking myself to prayer, I find not the least enmity and repugnance to them. For although at first, when I hear it, it may cause in me a little reluctance, yet not with any disquiet or alteration in me. Nay sometimes when I see certain persons on these occasions take pity on me, I laugh to myself, since all the sufferings

ings of this life seem to me so inconsiderable, that there is no reason to grieve at any of them: for I imagine that I am as in a dream, and upon my awaking I see that all will prove nothing.

36. "God gives me also now more lively desires, more love for solitude, and a much greater disengagement from the world, by the means of these visions, whereby I am made to understand what all is. And as to my kindred, so far from being tied to them, many of them rather weary me and disquiet me, and I part with them all with freedom and content, when it may conduce ever so little to the serving God better: and so I, on all sides, find peace.

37. "Some things, whereof I have been advertised in prayer, have befallen me very punctually. So that now in respect of God's doing me favours, I find myself much better, but in serving him on my part, very much worse, since I have received here the consolations that have been presented to me; though this sometimes much afflicts me, the penance I do is little, the honour they do me is much, and many times much against my will.

Third Relation.

38. "It is about nine months since I wrote what is penned above. From that time not having turned my back upon the favours which God hath done me, methinks according to what I understand, I have received anew a much greater liberty. Till now methought I had need of others, and I put some confidence in the succours of the world: now I perceive clearly they are all no better than so many twigs of dried rosemary, and that there is no depending or leaning upon them; for upon the least weight of contradiction or detraction pressing on them, they are presently broken. Therefore

fore I have found by experience, that the true remedy against our falling, is leaning on the cross, and trusting in him who was fastened to it. I find him a real true friend, and hereby I am possessed of such an absolute dominion, that methinks I could stand my ground against all the world, should it oppose me, if God do not leave me.

39. "I know this truth so manifestly, that though formerly I was wont to be delighted with being loved by others, now I care not at all for it; methinks it rather disgusts me, except it be those with whom I treat about the matters of my soul, or those whom I hope to benefit, the former, that they may bear with me, and the latter, that they may more willingly hearken to me, and believe me in what I speak concerning the vanity of all things: these, I say, I would be loved by.

40. "In many grievous afflictions, persecutions and contradictions, which I have met with these months past, our Lord hath given me great courage; and the greater the troubles were, the greater hath been my courage, without ever being weary of suffering: and I not only was not displeased with them that spoke evil of me, but methinks I bore them a new affection. I know not how this could be, but it is very evident that it was given by the hand of God.

41. "Naturally I am wont, when I desire a thing, to be over eager in affecting it; now my desires are so calm, that when I see them fulfilled, I know not whether I should rejoice or grieve, unless it be in matters relating to prayer, all is so moderated that I seem to be without sense, and do continue in this sort for some days.

42. "The ardour for doing penance which sometimes seizes me, is very great; and if I do any, I feel it so little, through that vehement desire, that sometimes, yea

almost

almost always, methinks it is a recreation and particular delight to me, though I do little in that kind, because I am very infirm.

43. "It is an extreme pain to me many times, and now more excessive than ever, to be obliged to eat, especially if I be in prayer, for then it makes me weep abundantly, and utter words of grief, as it were, without perceiving it, which is more than I am used to do for the greatest afflictions I have had in this life; at least I do not remember that I have ever uttered any, for in these matters I am not a woman, but have a hard heart.

44. "I feel in myself a great desire, more than I was used, that God should have persons who may serve him with all disengagement, and who adhere not to any thing of this mortal life, (seeing that all is but children's play) and especially learned men, in this great necessity of the church, (the sight of which afflicts me so, that methinks it is but a folly to be troubled at any thing else) and I do nothing but recommend them to God; because I see that one such person entirely perfect, with a true fervor of the love of God, will do more than a great many who are but tepid.

45. "In matters of faith I seem to have a much greater strength and resolution than ever. Methinks I would oppose myself, alone, against all the heretics, to make them sensible of the error they are in, and the false opinions they hold: and I extremely resent the loss of so many souls.

46. "I see many souls advanced in the way of virtue and perfection, which I evidently discern, it was God's holy will should be so by my means: and I perceive, through his goodness, that my soul goes on increasing every day more and more in the love of him.

47. "Methinks that if I were even to desire it ever so much, I could not be transported with vain glory; nor

nor do I see how I could ever imagine that any one of these virtues is my own; for it is not very long since I saw myself, and that for many years, without any; and now on my part, I do nothing else but receive favours, without returning any service, as the most useless thing in the world. And so it is, that I sometimes consider how all advance except myself, who am good for nothing. I speak this not out of humility, but because it is the very truth, and the knowing myself to be so useless, makes me sometimes fearful, lest perhaps I may be deluded. So that I see evidently that these advantages come to me from these raptures and revelations, in which I have no share, nor contribute to the receiving them any more than a stock. This makes me secure and much quieter; and I cast myself into the arms of God, and am confident in my desires, which I know for certain are even to die for his sake, and to lose all manner of repose, come what can come.

48. "Days past, in which I very frequently recal to mind what St. Paul says (though I am not secure that it is really so in me) that methinks I neither live nor speak, nor have any will, but that there is one within me, who governs me, and strengthens me; and I go about as one out of herself, so that life is a very great torment to me. And the greatest thing that I can offer to God, as a special service, is that I am willing to live for his sake, notwithstanding that I find it so painful to me to remain here separated from him. This only I would have, that my life should pass in great afflictions and persecutions, and since I am not fit to do him service, I would at least suffer for him: and I would willingly endure all the crosses in the world for a little more merit, I mean for the better accomplishing his holy will.

"I have

"I have heard nothing in prayer, though many years before it fell out, but what I have seen all fulfilled. The things that I see and understand of the greatnesses of God, and how he hath conducted them, are so many, that I almost never begin to think of them, but my reason and understanding is lost, as in one that sees things transcending his capacity, and I remain in recollection. God preserves me so much from offending him, that really I am sometimes astonished at it. For methinks, I see herein the great care he takes of me, without my contributing thereto any thing on my part, who was, before these things, an ocean of sins and wickedness. Now the reason why I would have all this known, is that the power and goodness of God may hereby be made manifest. Be he eternally praised, *Amen.*" So far the holy mother.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXII.

The saint is inspired with the design of erecting a new monastery, in which a stricter enclosure, together with all the rigours of the primitive rule of her order, might be observed. (The first occasion of which she relates as follows.) Foundation of the monastery of Avila, chap. 1.

"OUR Lord having been pleased, of his goodness, to shew me in a strange and frightful vision, the place and punishments, that were prepared for me in hell, had I gone on in that way which I had formerly taken up; as also other great and secret things concerning the glory laid up for the good, and the torments of the wicked in the other world: I was desirous of finding out some way and means, both of doing penance for my sins, that I might escape so insupportable a misery, and of effecting something, that I might obtain so excessive a glory. I longed after solitude, and desired to fly from company, and once for all to separate myself totally from the world. My spirit had no rest, though this was not a troublesome but a pleasant and delicious restlessness; it being evident that it was from God, and that his Majesty had infused heat into my soul, to enable it to digest some other more solid food than that which it had commonly fed on. I was thinking what I was able to do for God; when it came into my mind that I ought principally to follow the call I had had from his divine Majesty unto this Order (of the Carmelites) by observing my rule in the greatest perfection that I could. For in the monastery where I was, although there were many servants of God, and his divine Majesty was well served therein:

therein; yet by reason of the extreme poverty they suffered there, the nuns went often abroad to several places, and the house was not founded in the observation of our rule in its first rigour, but only as then was the general custom of the whole Order, according to the *bull of mitigation.* I saw there likewise other inconveniences (though it were a large, fair, and pleasant dwelling) but my being necessitated so often to go and stay abroad, was a main disturbance to me, which happened to me more than any of the rest: because several persons taking content to have me in their company, were importunate with my superiors to procure their licence for it, who not being able to deny them, commanded me to gratify them herein; so that I could be but little in the monastery.

"It happened once that certain young women, some of them seculars and others religious, being in my cell, and discoursing together, that the life that we led in this monastery was troublesome, by reason of the too much company; one of them said to me and to the rest, that if we had a mind to embrace such a manner of life, as was that of the discalceate nuns of St. Francis (the poor Clares) it would be very feasible to erect such a house. I who long since had the same desires, began to treat with a certain widow gentlewoman, my intimate friend, Donna Guimara de Ulloa, about it, who had also the same desire. She began to propose ways and means of endowihg it with a settled revenue; but, as I now perceive, those projects had no likelihood, though through the great desire we had thereof, we then thought otherwise. At last we agreed, earnestly to recommend this affair to God.

"One day after I had communicated, our Lord strictly charged me to set about it with all my might, making me great promises: *that the monastery should*

not fail to be erected; that his divine Majesty should be very much served in it; that it should bear the title of St. Joseph, who should stand at one gate for our guard, and our Lady, the glorious Virgin his mother, at the other; and that himself would stand always in our company: and that this house should become a star, that should give a great lustre. He said further, *that though the religious* (of those days) *were relaxed in their rule, I was not to think he was therefore but little served by religious orders; for what would become of the world, were it not for the religious? That I should tell my confessor this, which his Majesty had enjoined me,* and that *he willed him not to oppose or hinder me at all.* This vision and this discourse, which our Lord had with me, after such a manner, had left in my soul such effects, that I could not doubt but that it was our Lord. At the same time this business caused in me an exceeding great affliction, because many of those huge crosses and labours which it was to cost me, did in part represent themselves to me.

"There seemed to be set before me a great reward; but when I saw I was to attempt a business so full of trouble, I was in suspense what to do; but our Lord often spoke to me again about it, laying down many grounds for it, and most demonstrative reasons, which I evidently saw were unanswerable, and that this was his will; insomuch as I durst not but acquaint my confessor therewith, who was F. Baltassar Alvarez, S. J. giving him in writing what had passed. He would not plainly and absolutely tell me I was to desist from such an enterprize, and suppress such a thought, though it seemed to him a thing no way feasible, and to natural reason impossible, seeing there was very little, or almost no ability for such a performance in that friend and companion of mine, who was the person that must effect it. He bid me treat with our provincial, F. Angelo de Salazar, and follow

his directions. I did not acquaint the provincial with these my visions, but that gentlewoman, the widow whom I spoke of, dealt with him, declaring her having some thoughts of building such a monastery. F. Provincial, being a very prudent person, a great servant of God, and a promoter of every good work, willingly condescended thereto, liking it very well; and they treated about the revenue the house was to have, for we were unwilling, for divers reasons, there should be above thirteen nuns.

" Before we began to treat, we wrote to Fr. Peter of Alcantara all that passed. He counselled us by no means to desert the business, and in all things gave us his opinion. Scarce did it begin to be known in the city, when so violent a persecution arose against us, as cannot in few words be described. It was talked of in all companies, derided, censured, called a silly project, and scoffed at by all; they said I was too well in my present monastery, with divers other things of that sort. This so heavy a persecution extremely troubled my companion and friend; nor knew I well what to do, for methought in part they had reason. Being thus exceedingly afflicted, and recommending myself to God, his Majesty began to comfort me, telling me I might hereby understand what great things the saints had suffered, who had been founders of orders; and that I might conclude I was to sustain more, and more heavy persecutions than I could yet imagine; but that I was not to make any account thereof. He also told me some things with which I was to acquaint my companion, with which, to my great astonishment, we were both of us immediately comforted, concerning our past trouble, and received courage for resisting all encounters from any person whatsoever. For so it was, that there was not even one person of prayer, whether secu-

lar

lar or religious, in the whole city of Avila, that did not oppose us, and think what we had taken in hand to be a strange extravagancy. Yea, such were the discourses and commotions, even in my own monastery, that the Provincial (after some time) thinking it a hard matter to set himself thus against all the world, recalled the licence he had granted us, and now would not admit of the house. And as to my companion, her confessors refused to give her absolution, unless she desisted from the enterprise, alledging that she was bound to take away the scandal.

" She repaired to a very learned man of the order of St. Dominick, called F. Peter Ivannez, an eminent servant of God, to give him an account of all that had passed (now this was before F. Provincial had withdrawn his approbation) for in all this city we found none that would give us advice, but they attributed all to our conceitedness and fancy. This gentlewoman gave an exact account to this holy man of her revenue, humbly entreating him to assist us, being then the most learned person in that place, and perhaps in the whole order. I also informed him of all we had designed, declaring to him some of the grounds and motives, without saying any thing to him about the revelation; for I was willing he should give us his opinion, conformably to those other grounds and natural reasons which I mentioned to him. He told us we must allow him eight days to give in his answer, and asked if we were resolved to follow his advice. I answered we were; but though I said so, and was then in the mind to do so, yet I never doubted but that the monastery should be built. My companion had still more faith than I, resolving never to desist for any thing that was said; but I, although it seemed to me impossible but that it must be effected, because I believed the revelation I had to be true; yet if that father,

being a person so learned, had told me, that we could not have done it without offending God and wounding our own consciences, methought I should presently have quitted this, and sought out some other way. This servant of God told me afterwards, that he had entertained some thought to do what he could to dissuade us from the undertaking, (for by this time he heard of the clamour of the people, &c.) but that whilst he set himself to consider upon the answer he should make us, and reflected upon the business, and our intention therein, with the manner of living, and religious observance we designed; he determined, and held for certain that it would be a high piece of service to God, and that it ought by no means to be deserted. Whereupon his answer was, that we should hasten to conclude it; directing us also as to the order and way we were to take, and telling us that though our money and ability were small, yet in something we were to trust to God; that if there were any who opposed us, we should send them to him, and that he would satisfy them. And thus he ever helped us, as I shall hereafter declare.

"Upon this we were exceedingly comforted, as also with seeing that some holy persons, who had been against us, were now somewhat calmed and pacified; yea that some of them also furthered us, amongst whom was that devout gentleman formerly mentioned (Francis de Salsedo), who conceiving that the design highly tended, as indeed it did) to the promoting of perfection, since the whole groundwork was laid in mental prayer, inclined to believe that it was possibly from God, though the means to effect it seemed to him very difficult, and in a manner impossible. Our Lord himself wrought this change, as he also turned the heart of a certain doctor (Daza) a priest, a great servant of God, the mirror of the whole city, and one kept there by God, for the cure and benefit of many souls; who also now condescended to assist us in the business. In this condition it was, and all along supported

supported with the help of many prayers, when already a house was purchased, commodiously seated, though but small; but for this I was not solicitous, our Lord having bid me enter as well as I could, and that I should see what his Majesty would do, (and O how well have I seen it) and therefore though I saw our stock was small, I was fully persuaded our Lord by other ways and means would favour and assist us.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXIII.

The business of the foundation of the monastery is interrupted for a time, and afterwards resumed. The difficulties the Saint meets with on the one hand, and the consolations she receives from God on the other. From the second chapter of her Foundations.

"THE business then being brought to this pass, and so near concluding, that the next day they were to draw up the writings, it so fell out that the F. Provincial changed his mind; moved, as I conceive, by the divine ordination, our Lord designing it to be done after another manner. So he being unwilling to admit it, my confessor presently commanded me to give it over; although our Lord knows the great troubles and afflictions it had already cost me, to bring it to this pass. When therefore the business was intermitted, and left off thus imperfect, men were more confirmed in their opinion that it was a meer impertinency of silly women; and their murmurs against me increased. All my monastery was offended at me, because I wanted to erect another more recluse. They said I wronged them and disparaged them; that I might serve God there well enough, since there were better there than myself; that I bore no love to the monastery; that it had been better to procure some revenue for it than for another. Some spoke of putting me in prison, and some (few) others took my part a little. I well perceived in divers things they had reason for what they said of me, and sometimes to appease them, I made some apologies; but because I would not tell them my chief ground, (namely my being commanded it by God,) I knew not what to do more, and therefore was silent. At other times God did me much

much favour, so that all this did not in the least disquiet me, but I quitted it with as much ease and content as if it had cost me nothing; yet none could believe this, not even my confessor, and others with whom I communicated the affairs of my soul; for they thought me extremely troubled and disordered on the occasion. I, conceiving I had done all I was able, accounted myself obliged to nothing farther, for the effecting what our Lord had commanded me; so I staid in the monastery, where I continued with much satisfaction and delight; and though I could not but think this foundation would be finished, not doubting, but being most confident of it, yet I knew neither how nor when.

"That which very much afflicted me, which it may be, our Lord was pleased to permit, that I might not want some vexation and torment, even in that part in which I was most sensible of pain) was that my confessor himself, as if he had done something against his mind, even whilst I was engaged in that violent storm of persecutions, instead of comforting me, as I hoped, wrote to me, that *by the event I might evidently perceive that all was a meer dream; and therefore that I should reform myself, and for the future attempt nothing on my own head, nor talk farther of this matter, seeing the scandal that it gave;* with many other such like things, all in effect to disquiet me. But that which tormented me, above all the rest put together, was that I began now to doubt, whether I had been an occasion, by any fault of mine, that God should be offended, since it seemed to me, that if these visions were illusions, all my prayer and the manner of it was an error, and I thereupon miserably deceived and ruined. This so exceedingly troubled me, that I was all in disorder, and very much afflicted. But our Lord, who never abandoned me in any of these straits, bad me then not afflict myself, since

I had

I had not displeased him, but had very much served him in that affair: that for the present I should do as my confessor commanded me, and discourse no more about it, till the season came for taking up the business again. With this I was abundantly comforted and satisfied, so that now all the persecution I had endured seemed nothing to me.

"Here our Lord taught me the great advantage of suffering afflictions and persecutions for his sake; for I felt such an increase of the love of God in my soul, with several other gifts, that I was amazed at it; and this makes me that I cannot choose but desire troubles. Others thought me to be much discouraged and disturbed, as indeed I should have been, had not our Lord in that extremity supported me with such transcendent favours. Then began I to feel stronger impulses of the love of God, as I said, and had greater raptures; though I held my peace, and said nothing to any one of these my improvements. In the mean time that holy Dominican, F. Peter Ivannez, believed for certain, as well as I, that this monastery would be erected; and I being unwilling to meddle therein, because I would not disobey my confessor, he, with that gentlewoman the widow, my friend, negotiated the business by letters at Rome, and laid out the manner and ways of bringing it about.

"Here also the devil began to procure, that from one to another it came to be whispered about, that I had had some revelation about this matter. Whereupon some, in a great fright, came to tell me the times were strict, and possibly I might be accused of something to the inquisition. This I took for a jest, and it made me laugh; for I never was afraid on such an account, as knowing very well that in matters of faith, or for the observation and defence of the least ceremony of the church, or whatever truth of the Holy Scripture, I was ready to

suffer

suffer a thousand deaths. And therefore I answered, they needed not fear for this, since my soul would be in a very ill case indeed, if there were any thing in it to make me fear the inquisition; that if I thought so, I would go myself to discover it, and that if I were wrongfully accused, our Lord would vindicate my innocence, and I should prove a gainer thereby.

"Upon this I conferred with my Dominican father, who, as I said, was so eminent for his learning, that I might confidently rely on what he should say. I then discovered to him all my visions, and my manner of prayer, and the high favours our Lord had done me, with the greatest clearness I could; and I entreated him he would thoroughly weigh all, and tell me if there were any thing therein disagreeable to Holy Scripture, or the church's definition; and likewise his own judgment upon the whole. He confirmed me very much; and to my thinking, he himself was also benefited not a little: for though he were a very good man, yet from thence forward he addicted himself more to mental prayer, and he retired to a convent of his order, that was very solitary, to be able the better to exercise himself therein; wherein he continued above two years, until his superiors to his great grief removed him thence, as having need of him, being so eminent a person. For my part, I much resented his departure from hence, because it was a great loss to me. But I was not ignorant of his gain, for being in great trouble, as I said, at his going away, our Lord bid me cheer up, and not grieve at it, for I was sufficiently directed. His soul returned thence so exceedingly improved, and so advanced in spirit, that when he came back he told me, he would not for any good in the world but have gone thither. I likewise for my part could say the same; for that which he at first assured me of, only by his learning, he now confirmed

me

me in, also, by the great experience he had of the spirit in things supernatural. And our Lord brought him hither at a season, in which he saw it was necessary for assisting and finishing the work of this monaste y, seeing his Majesty would have it effected." So far the Saint, who further relates of this holy man, in the history of her life (chap. xxxiv.) that she saw in a vision, our Blessed Lady cloathing him with a very white long garment, as a reward for the service he had done her, in helping to erect this house; betokening that his soul should be defended and preserved for the future in purity, and that he should not fall into mortal sin. In the same place she adds several things, with relation to his saintlike life and death, and assures us that after his death (at which time she saw his soul carried up strait to heaven, without touching at all upon purgatory,) he had appeared to her several times in very great glory, and told her divers things. But to return to the thread of the history. "I continued," says the Saint, "in this silence, neither prosecuting the business nor speaking of it for five or six months; nor did our Lord in the mean time command me any thing concerning it. I knew not what the reason of it was, but I could not put it out of my head but that it would be done. At the end of this time, F. Rector of the Jesuits of Avila being gone, his Majesty brought hither to succeed him, F. Jaspar de Salazar, a man very spiritual, of great courage and understanding, and eminently learned, at a time when I stood in great need of such a person: for that father who was my confessor before (Baltassar Alvarez) though he very well knew my spirit, yet, having a timorous superior, durst not, in some particulars, for certain reasons, promote any thing. Now my spirit already proceeded with such impetuosities, that it felt a great torment in being thus restrained and bound up, though for all this

I did

I did not depart from his commands. Being one day in great distress, because I thought my confesssor did not believe me, our Lord bad me not disquiet myself, for that trouble would soon have an end. I was very glad, thinking I was to die shortly; and I felt a great joy, when I reflected thereon: but afterward I saw plainly it was meant of the coming of this F. Rector; for I had never any more occasion of farther trouble in that kind, since this good father did not at all restrain the minister who was my confessor, but bad him comfort me, telling him he should not need to fear, nor conduct me in so narrow a path, but permit the Spirit of God to operate freely, *&c.*

"This F. Rector came to visit me, my confessor enjoining me to treat with him with all freedom. I was wont to find a very great reluctance against the uttering affairs of this nature; but here it fell out that upon my approaching the confession seat, I perceived in my spirit I know not what, which I do not remember I ever felt either before or after, when I treated with any other; neither could I tell how it was, nor by any comparison express it. It was a spiritual joy, and a notice my soul had, that that soul should understand me, and sympathize with mine, although I knew not how: for he was a person whom I had never spoke to, and of whom I had never before had the least notice. Afterwards I well perceived that my spirit was not a jot mistaken, for on all occasions the treating with him was highly advantageous to my soul: our Lord having given him extraordinary talents for making souls run, and to go only step by step towards him, and for perfectly weaning and disengaging them from all things, and mortifying them, together with a peculiar gift of discerning spirits, which it delighted me to see."

The Saint adds in the same place, that as soon as she

she began to treat with this servant of God, she presently understood that he was a pure and holy soul; and in the xxxivth chapter of her life, that our Lord had shewn her some things concerning great favours which he did him. Where also she tells us, that he being once persecuted and greatly afflicted, our Lord had appeared to her at the elevatiou of the sacred host, hanging upon the cross, and had spoken certain words to her, with which she was to acquaint him for his comfort; and others, by way of prevention to him, concerning something that would happen; representing to him how much himself had endured for his sake, and that he should prepare himself to suffer. And this, says she, gave him much comfort and courage; and all happened to him just so as our Lord had foretold. But to return to our history.

"A few days after this first communication with this holy man, our Lord began to press me anew to resume the business of the monastery, and to acquaint my confessor, and this same F. Rector, with several reasons and arguments why they should not hinder me. I did so, and some of them gave them some fear, though F. Rector made no question but it was the Spirit of God; for he weighed with serious attention and consideration all its effects. At last, after many discourses and arguings, they durst not forbid nor retard the business any longer, and my confessor yielded to give me leave again to use my utmost endeavours for bringing it to a conclusion. I well understood the trouble I exposed myself to, being so much alone, and having so little ability to do any thing. We agreed the business should be carried on with all secrecy, and so I caused a sister of mine, who lived elsewhere, to purchase the house in her own name, and to make it ready, as though it had been for herself, with some money which by certain ways our Lord procured us, wherewith how God furnished us

would

would be too long here to relate. I was very careful to do nothing against obedience; though I said nothing of this matter to my superiors, knowing that if I had, all would have come to nothing. But sure I am, I did nothing contrary to our rules.

"In procuring monies, in negotiating, in preparing, settling, and giving orders for the fabric of this new monastery; I sustained many and great difficulties, and most of them by myself alone: for though my companion did what she could, yet that which she could do was in a manner nothing, except bearing the name, and the owning thereof; all the rest of the trouble was mine, troubles so many and so intolerable, that I am now astonished how I was able to endure them. Sometimes in my affliction I said: *O my Lord, how hast thou commanded me things that seem impossible? For though I am but a woman, yet if I were at liberty, some good issue might be expected; but as I am restrained on all sides, without money, without order, where to get it, without means or possibility of procuring the bulls, and good for nothing, what can I do, O Lord?* Being once in a great strait, so that I knew not what to do, nor how to pay some workmen, St. Joseph, my true father and patron, appeared to me, and certified me that I should not want money, and bid me to bargain with them; and so I did, having not one farthing, and our Lord supplied me by such means as made them wonder that heard it. I found the house very small, and such as that there seemed no possibility of making a monastery of it. I would have purchased another small house that adjoined to it, to make a church of it; but I neither had wherewith, nor was there any means to buy it, nor knew I what to do in it. One day, after communicating, our Lord said to me: *I have bid you already enter as you can.* Adding by way of exclamation: *O the covetousness of mankind! that you can*

think

think you shall want earth! How often have I slept abroad in the open air, having no house to cover me? I was much struck with these words, knowing that he had cause to complain; and so I went into that little house, and casting it with myself into parts, I found it would make an entire and perfect, though small monastery; and therefore I took no care to purchase any more ground, but only endeavoured that it might be put in hand, and made fit to dwell in, so as to be altogether plain and homely, only so as not to become prejudicial to health, for this in all our houses is ever to be considered.

"As I was going to receive the blessed Sacrament on St. Clare's day, that virgin in wonderful beauty appeared to me, and bad me pursue vigorously the work begun, for she would aid me. Hereupon I became greatly devoted to her; and what she said proved exactly true, for a monastery of nuns of her order, that was near, helped to keep us; and what is more, by little and little, she brought this my desire to be punctually accomplished, that the same poverty that is observed in the monastery of this blessed saint, is now observed in this of ours. And further our Lord provides, in such manner for us, (perhaps upon the prayers of this blessed Saint) that without so much as our asking, all necessaries are abundantly sent into us. May he be eternally blessed, *Amen.*

"About the same time, being in a church of the Dominicans, on the festival of our Lady's Assumption, whilst I was thinking on the sins which in former times I had confessed in that church, and the passages of my evil life, I was taken with a rapture so violent, that it deprived me in a manner of my senses. I sat down, and then methought I could neither see the elevation of the blessed sacrament, nor hear the mass, which gave me afterwards a scruple. Being in this condition, I saw in

spirit

spirit myself cloathed with a garment of an extraordinary whiteness and admirable splendor. I perceived not at first who it was vested me, but afterward I saw our Blessed Lady on my right hand, and my patron St. Joseph on my left, who cloathed me with that robe; which action imported, that I was now cleansed from all my sins. After I was thus arrayed, and my soul filled with unspeakable delight and joy; methought the Blessed Virgin presently took me by the hand, telling me that *I pleased her very much, in the service I did to her dear spouse St. Joseph; that I might be confident, what I had designed concerning the monastery should come to pass, and that therein our Lord, and they two, would be greatly served; that I should never need to fear any breach in it, for they would guard us, as also her dearest Son had promised to be with us; and that in token of the truth hereof she gave me that jewel.* And methought she cast about my neck a very fair necklace of gold, with a cross hanging to it of inestimable value. Those jewels and gold were so far beyond all that can be found here, that there is no comparison, their lustre being much greater than any thing we can here imagine; nor can the understanding reach to the apprehending of what the robe was made, nor to the conceiving such a whiteness as sometimes our Lord discovers; for all that is fair or white in this world, is but a smut with a coal, if compared to it. The beauty I saw in our Lady was excessive, though I apprehended it not by way of any one particular figure, but the whole form and all the features of her face at once. Her vesture was white, and of an extraordinary lustre, not which dazzles but delights. I discerned not the glorious St. Joseph so plainly, though I well knew he was there, after the manner of visions that are not seen. After they had staid a while with me, who was replenished on this occasion, with greater joy

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and content, than to my thinking, I had ever experienced before, and willingly would never have parted with them; methought I saw them ascend to heaven, accompanied with a great number of angels; leaving me quite alone, though full of consolation, and so elevated and recollected in prayer, that for a time I was utterly unable to stir or speak, and was as it were beside myself. I remained with a vehement impulse of being perfectly consumed for God, and with such like effects, that I could not doubt but that it was from God, and it left me much comfort and great peace. As to what this Queen of angels had also said to me about obedience, (viz. that the monastery should be under the bishop, and not under the superiors of the order) our Lord told me it was not at that time expedient to give the superiority to them, but that I should send to Rome, by such a way; promising that he would procure me an answer and a dispatch by that same way. And so it fell out, that sending by that very way which our Lord had directed me, an answer was presently returned, which made well for us; for otherwise we should never have had an end of our negotiations."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Whilst the business of the monastery is privately carried on, the Saint is sent, by obedience, from Avila to Toledo, for the consolation of a very eminent lady. A learned Dominican there is much advanced in spirit, by her intercession. [Foundations, Chap. III.]

'WITH all the diligence and care I used that this affair might not be known, yet it could not be carried on so privately but that several persons heard something of it: of whom some believed it, others not. I was much afraid, lest when the F. Provincial came to town, he might have heard something of this matter, and thereupon have commanded me to desist, and prosecute it no farther, and so on a sudden all must be dropped; for I was resolved to obey him. But here our Lord provided against this danger in the following manner. It happened that in the city of Toledo, above threescore miles from hence, the Lady Louisa de la Cerda (sister to the Duke of Medina Celi) was in great affliction for the death of her husband; and her grief was so violent and extreme, that her life was in danger. She heard of this poor sinful wretch, our Lord so ordering that I should be well spoken of to her, for some other good ends that he designed to bring about: and understanding that I was in a monastery, in which it was lawful and usual for the nuns to go abroad, she had an earnest desire to see me, conceiving that she should receive some comfort from me: our Lord inspiring her with this desire. Whereupon she presently endeavoured to get me thither, sending messengers and letters for that purpose to F. Provincial: who being desirous to satisfy and pleasure her sent me his order, under obedience, to repair thither forthwith, with one companion. This order I received on Christmas-day at night, and it gave me some disturbance;

for I was much afflicted to think that I was to go thither, because they imagined some good to be in me, which I knowing myself so great a sinner, could no way endure.

'Whereupon recommending myself very earnestly to God, I was taken with a rapture, which continued all or the greatest part of Mátins. In this rapture our Lord said to me: *Daughter, neglect not to go, not listening to the motions of others, for few will advise thee without temerity: though thou shalt meet with troubles, I shall be greatly served therein: and it conduceth much to the business of the monastery to absent thyself a while, till the Breve come from Rome. For the devil hath laid a notable snare for thee, against the coming of the Provincial. But fear nothing, for I will be there to help thee.* With these words I was extremely comforted and encouraged. I told them to father Rector, who bad me by no means to neglect to go: though there were some others here, who apprehended a plot of the devil in it—and advised that I should write again to the Provincial. But I, being animated with what I had heard in prayer, made no account of what they objected; and went without fear, though not without very great confusion; when I considered upon what account I was sent thither, and how much they were mistaken in me: and this made me more importunate with our Lord in prayer that he would not leave me.

'It pleased God that Donna Louisa was so far comforted, that immediately she began to be apparently better, and every day grew chearfuller. I conceive our Lord would have it so, for the many prayers which some good people that I knew put up for me, that this affair might succeed well. This lady was a great servant of God, and so very good, that her singular piety and devotion supplied that wherein I was deficient. She began to bear an extraordinary affection towards me, but all proved in a manner a cross to me; for these treatments and civilities rather tortured me exceedingly, and the making so much of me

made

made me very much afraid. My soul was put upon great recollection, so that I durst not grow remiss for a minute; and our Lord was not unmindful of me; for whilst I was there he did me most signal favours. He was also pleased that during my stay in that house, some of the domestics should be very much changed, and improved in the service of his Divine Majesty: though I was not altogether exempt from meeting with troubles also, and envy from some others, upon their seeing me so much beloved by their lady. I believe our Lord permitted that such like things, and some others of another nature, should give me some uneasiness, to the end that I should not engulf myself too deep in those delights and favours, which on the other side I received. But our Lord was pleased to bring me through all with gain and advantage to my soul.

'Whilst I was here there happened to come to this city (Toledo), a very eminent religious man [F. Vincent Varron, a Dominican, formerly confessor to the father of the saint], to whom many years before I had communicated the affairs of my soul. Going to hear mass in a church of his order, near the house where I dwelt, I espied him; and presently had a great mind to know in what state that soul then was, which I desired might do God some eminent service. Upon this I rose up to go to speak to him; but being now well recollected in prayer, I began to think it would be loss of time; for who put me upon this? So I returned to sit me down again. This, I think, happened to me thrice: but at last the good angel prevailed over the bad: so I went and called him, and he came and spoke with me in a confessional. We began to ask one another about our lives; it having been now many years since we had seen each other: I told him mine was full of sundry troubles of mind. He importuned me much to tell him what troubles: I answered they were not things fit for me to relate to him. He replied that since that Dominican father whom I mentioned before [Peter Ivannez] had

been informed of them, he being his intimate friend could learn them of him; and therefore I should make no difficulty about it. In fine he could not leave off urging me, nor I methinks refuse telling him: for notwithstanding the great reluctance and bashfulness wherewith I was wont to treat about these matters; yet now I had not the least difficulty, but was much comforted therein. So I acquainted him with all, under the seal of confession. Methought he was more discreet than ever: though I always took him for a person of great understanding. I considered the great talents and parts he had for doing eminent service, if he were entirely devoted to God: and this hath been usual with me for some years, that I never see one that likes me very well, but immediately I would have him perfectly devoted to God; and this sometimes with such violent and impetuous desires, that I cannot choose but do so: and though I wish all the world to serve him, yet I much more anxiously long that those for whom I have a more particular value may do it; and therefore I more earnestly petition our Lord for them. Just so it befel me with regard to this religious man, of whom I am speaking. He prayed me to recommend him much to God (though he needed not, for I could do no other), so I went away to the place, where alone and retired I used to put myself in prayer. There, being wholly recollected, I began to treat with our Lord in a way and style as it were of a rude familiarity: and indeed many times I so treat with him, not knowing what I say; for 'tis love here that speaks; and the soul is so beside herself, that she considers not the distance between her and God; because the love which she perceives God bears to her, makes her forget herself, and think that she is wholly in God: whereupon as if she were one and the self same thing, without any division or difference, she talks impertinencies. I remember how after I had entreated him, with many tears, to cause that soul to serve him in good earnest (for though

I judged

I judged him a good man, yet that did not satisfy me, for I desired to have him much better) that I said to our Lord: *O Lord, thou must not deny me this favour: see this is a person fit for us to make a friend of.* O the immense bounty and goodness of Almighty God! who regards not the words, but the desires and affections with which they are uttered: since he endured such a wretch as I am to speak so confidently to his Divine Majesty. Be he blessed to all eternity!

'I remember in those hours of prayer the same evening I was in a great perplexity upon thinking whether I were in the grace of God; and that I could not be certain whether I were so or no: not because I desired to know it; but because I desired to die, that I might not continue in such a life wherein I was never secure, whether indeed I were not dead: it being impossible there should be found a more cruel or more painful death to me, than the considering that perhaps I was under God's displeasure. And this so grieved and troubled me, that I even bathed myself with and melted into tears, beseeching his Divine Majesty not to permit so great an evil. I understood then, that I might assuredly take comfort and courage, as being in the state of grace; since such a love of God, and other like favours, which his Majesty did to my soul, and such sentiments as he gave me were not consistent with, nor allowed to a soul that continued in mortal sin. I remained also with a strong confidence, that our Lord would bestow on this person that which I had requested.

'His Divine Majesty bid me tell this religious man certain words: which touched me to the quick; because I knew not how to speak them to him: for this same delivering of messages to a third person, is that in which I always have found much difficulty; and especially to one, who, whether he would take it well from me or deride me, I knew not. Wherefore for the shame I had to tell them (by word of mouth) I wrote them down, and so gave them to

to him to read. It appeared plainly that the thing was from God, by the operation these words had: for he determined to apply himself very seriously to mental prayer; and our Lord, by my means, caused some truths to be told him, which without my understanding it, conduced so very much to his purpose, that he was astonished at it. No doubt but it was our Lord that disposed him to believe that these words came from his Divine Majesty; and I, how miserable soever, besought him most earnestly to conduct him thoroughly to himself, making him despise pleasures, and all things else in this life: which his Majesty afterward so punctually effected (blessed be his name for ever) that this person never discoursed with me without putting me as it were in an extasy; our Lord having in a very short time done him such high favours, and so entirely taken possession of him for himself, that he seems no longer to live to any thing of this world. His Majesty upholds him by his all-powerful hand; for if he go on thus, (as I trust in God he will, being so well grounded in the knowledge of himself) he will prove one of his choicest servants, and exceedingly useful to many souls: having in a little space of time attained to great experience of spiritual matters, &c. and what he understands not by experience, he willingly learns of such as do; our Lord also assisting him, and giving him a strong faith: so that he hath much benefited both himself and others, among whom I am one: for as our Lord understood what heavy afflictions I was to sustain, so it seems his Majesty provided, that being to take to himself some who had the care of my soul, others should be left who have in my great extremities assisted me, and done me much good. Our Lord hath totally changed him, so that (as one may say) he scarce knows himself: and he hath also given him strength of body for doing of penance, which he had not formerly, being very infirm. He hath made him courageous to all that is good, besides other favours: so that it

is sufficiently evident to have been a particular call of God. Be he for ever blessed.

'All this good hath befallen him, I believe, from the graces bestowed on him in prayer: for his virtues are not counterfeit; our Lord having already been pleased to try him by certain great mortifications, in which he has comported himself with extraordinary courage, as one that now understands very well the value of the merit which is acquired by the suffering of persecution. I was once conversing with him in a certain speak-house: and the love of God, which I understood in spirit, his soul burned with, was so great, that it made me almost absorbed: for I considered the wonders of Almighty God, who in so short a space had elevated a soul to so high a pitch. It caused in me much confusion to see him listen, with so great humility to what I was speaking about certain matters of prayer; myself having so little in treating in that manner on such a subject with such a person as he was: in which perhaps our Lord was willing to bear with me, by reason of the vehement desire I had to see him a forward proficient in the way of perfection. My soul found so much benefit in discoursing with him, that he seemed to have kindled in me a new fire of amorous longings to begin anew to serve God with greater fervour. O my Jesus, how much can a soul do, that is all inflamed with the love of thee! At what a great rate ought we to value such a soul, and to intreat our Lord it may long continue here in this life! He that hath the same love would fain march after such souls as these if he could. But to return to what I was speaking of; I being in an excessive joy upon beholding the treasures which our Lord had deposited in that soul, and rendering high praise and thanks to the Divine Majesty for ordering me to be the means whereby this should be brought about, who knew myself so unworthy of such a favour; being now no longer able to bear so great a joy, I was taken with a rapture, which

though

though it lasted but a little while, made me in a manner lose my senses. In this rapture I saw Christ our Lord, in great majesty and glory, shewing himself exceedingly pleased with what passed there: and so he told me, and would have me plainly to see that at such conferences he is ever present, and how extremely he is delighted to have persons love in this manner to speak of him.

'Another time being far from this place, I saw this religious man borne on high by angels in great glory. I understood by this vision that his soul improved much, and so it was: for he was slandered by the imputation of a horrible crime, much to his disgrace, and by one whom he had formerly obliged, which notwithstanding he endured with admirable patience: performing also other things much to God's honour, and suffering other persecutions, of which I need say no more, seeing all is known to your reverence.

'As to the predictions concerning the monastery already mentioned, and others which I may speak of afterwards, relating either to it or to several other things, they have all been punctually fulfilled. Some of them were foretold me three years before; some others sooner, some others later, as our Lord revealed them to me. I always related them to my confessor, and to the widow gentlewoman, my friend, with whom I had liberty to talk freely: and she, as I understood afterwards, discovered them to others who know that I lie not: which our Lord did not permit me to do in any thing, much less in matters of such importance. A cousin of mine dying suddenly (at which I was exceedingly troubled, because he had not time to confess), it was told me in prayer that my sister should also die in the like manner; and therefore I should go to her, and admonish her to prepare herself for it. This I told to my confessor; but he not giving me leave to go, our Lord often repeated the same to me, till he being acquainted with this, bid me go, for there could be no harm

harm in it. She lived in a certain village, to which I went, without acquainting her with the occasion; and proceeded by little and little with her, to give her what light I could in all things. I persuaded her in particular to confess often, and in every thing to have a main care of her soul: and she being very pious, acted accordingly. Some four or five years after this she died, without having any one by her, or being able to make her confession: but it fell out well, that according to her custom it had been but about a week since she had confessed. She was not long in purgatory: for within eight days after her death, one morning, as soon as I had communicated, I saw our Lord conducting her into eternal glory. In all those years, to that moment that I was told of her death, I never forgot what had been said to me by our Lord: nor my companion neither, who upon the unexpected news that she was dead, came to me all amazed to see how punctually that was fulfilled which had been spoken to me. Blessed for ever be he who takes such care of souls that they may not perish.' Amen.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXV.

A conference of the holy mother, with a devout sister of the same Order, determines her to found the new monastery in poverty. Our Lord presses her to retnrn to Avila; the affair of the new establishment requiring her presence there. [Foundations, Chap. 4.]

" NOW whilst I was living in the house of the lady above mentioned, with whom I continued above half a year, our Lord was pleased that a devout sister, a beata of our order, called Maria de Jesu, who dwelled seventy leagues off this city, should come to hear of me. She happened to take a journey to this part of the kingdom, and understanding that I was at Toledo, travelled some miles out of her way, to come hither to confer with me. Our Lord had moved her, the same year and month, that he had me, to build another monastery of our order: out of a desire of which she had sold all she had, and went to Rome barefoot, to obtain leave to effect it. She is a woman of much penance and prayer, our Lord hath bestowed on her many graces and favours. Our B. lady appeared to her, and bid her put her purpose in execution. She so surpassed me in serving our Lord, that I was ashamed to be in her presence; she shewed me the Bull she had brought from Rome: and in a fortnight's time that we lived together, we took order how we would have these monasteries established. Till I conferred with her, I never knew that our rule, before it was mitigated, forbad all having propriety; and I was unwilling to found a monastery without revenue, because I would not have ourselves to be distracted with the care of providing necessaries; never reflecting on the many cares and troubles propriety carries along with it. But this blessed woman, being taught of God, very well understood, though she could

couldno t read, what I with so often reading our rule and constitutions, was nevertheless ignorant of. When she told me this, I was glad, and liked it well: though I feared they would not consent to it, nor allow me to put it in execution; but would say, I attempted extravagancies; and that I was not to undertake matters, for which others might come to smart, by my means. For had it concerned only myself, and depended on me alone to determine; I should not have been with-held from it little or much: yea the only thinking that I was to observe the counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ, gave me great satisfaction; for his Majesty had already given me very strong desires of poverty. So that for my own part, I made no doubt that it was the best: for I had wished not before, if it might have been ——— to have gone a begging, and to have asked alms for the love of God, and to possess nothing, neither house, nor any thing else: but I doubted lest others, to whom God might not have given the same desires, would not by this occasion live in discontent. I likewise made a question, whether I might not by this means, be a cause of dissipation to them; for that I saw some poor monasteries not very recollected: and I never considered, that their poverty proceeded from their want of recollection, not their want of recollection from their poverty: for solicitude makes not religious persons the richer; and God is never wanting to them that serve him.

" In short I had a weak faith; not so this servant of God. Now though I consulted many, for their judgment, on all occasions, I found almost none of this opinion, neither confessors, nor other learned men, with whom I treated: they alleged so many reasons for me, that I knew not what to do. For when I understood that the rule enjoined it, and saw it was of greater perfection, I could not be persuaded to admit the having revenue: and if sometimes I found myself overpowered by them yet

yet afterwards returning to prayer, and beholding Christ upon the cross so very poor and naked; I could not with any patience endure the thought of being rich: and I begged of him, with many tears, that he would bring it about, that I might see myself poor, as he was.

" About the same time it fell out, that this lady having never seen the holy man, F. Peter of Alcantara, and being extremely desirous to see him, our Lord was pleased, at my entreaty, to bring him to our house. Now he, like a true lover of poverty, having for so many years observed it, very well understood the great riches comprised therein; and thereupon much assisted me; and bid me by no means to desist from pursuing this my design. So with this opinion, and approbation of his, as of one, that better than others, might deliver his judgment in this matter, by reason of his long experience, I resolved to proceed no further in consulting others.

" Being one day in prayer, earnestly recommending this business to God, our Lord said to me, *Daughter, by no means neglect to found it in poverty; for this is my eternal Father's will, and mine: I will assist you.* This was with such powerful effects, in a rapture, that I could no way doubt, but that it was from God. Another time he told me, that in revenue there was confusion; with several things in commendation of poverty: assuring me, that whosoever heartily served him should not want necessaries. And of such want, for my part, I was never afraid. Our Lord also changed the mind of that Dominican father (Peter Ivannez) who had writ to me before against founding without rents; so that now I was exceedingly satisfied, having heard this from our Lord, and having the opinions of two such persons: so that in my resolving to live upon alms, methought I already enjoyed all the wealth in the world.

" At this time my provincial released me from the tie of obedience, which he had imposed on me, of living in this

this lady's house; leaving it to my choice either to go, or to stay, as I liked best, until the time of the election of a prioress, in our monastery of the incarnation. I was informed that divers intended to put me upon that office: the mere thought of which so afflicted me, that I resolved willingly to endure any kind of torment for God, but by no means could prevail with myself to accept of this. For besides the trouble, which was no small one, (because the number of the nuns was very great) together with other reasons, and motives, I never loved to be in office ——as thinking it greatly to endanger my conscience: so that I thanked God I was not there; and I wrote to the women, my friends, intreating them not to vote for me. One day, as I was much pleased to see myself out of that noise, our Lord said to me: *Daughter, thou must not neglect, by any means, to go thither: and since thou desired the cross, there is a good heavy one prepared for thee: Decline it not; for I will support thee: go courageously, and speedily.* Upon this I grieved exceedingly, and did nothing but mourn, supposing my cross to be the charge of being superioress, which I could by no means be persuaded was good for my soul. Of this I gave account to my ghostly father, who commanded me to dispatch presently, and to be gone; it being evident that this was of greater perfection: but by reason of the great heats, at that season, he respited me certain days, lest the journey should hurt my health; for he supposed it was soon enough, if I got thither by the election. But our Lord having otherwise ordered, I was presently to obey; for I found myself so extremely disquieted, that I could not use mental prayer, and methought I was disobedient to our Lord's command; and because I was made much of there, was unwilling to go away, and so expose myself to suffering, that I did but give God fair words; and since I knew where it would be greater perfection for me to live, why did I neglect it? For if I died in the way,

way, well and good. In short I was brought to that pass, that to stay and spend any longer time there, was become so great a torment to me, that I requested the lady she would be pleased to let me go, for my ghostly father, seeing me in this condition, already bid me be gone; God having inwardly moved him, as he had me. She took my intended departure so much to heart, that this proved to me another torment——and I accounted it an extraordinary favour that she condescended to it, because of the grief it caused her; but she being a great servant of God, and I telling her it tended much to the service of his divine Majesty——in conclusion, she with much difficulty was satisfied.

" For my part, I felt now no more sorrow about my departure; for upon my discovering or understanding that any thing is of greater perfection, and more for God's service, I am contented, and the joy I found in pleasing him, took away my grief for parting with that lady, whom I saw so exceedingly afflicted at my going away; and with others also, to whom I was very much obliged, and particularly with my confessor, who was of the society of Jesus, and one whom I was much satisfied with. But the more I saw, I was parting with these consolations, for the love of God, the more I was pleased at the parting with them. I could not well account for it, how these two contraries should consist together, to receive joy and comfort from that very thing, which yet displeased me to my very soul; for here where I was, I lived at ease, and quiet, and had the convenience of spending many hours every day in prayer; whereas I saw I was now going to put myself into the fire, our Lord having already signified as much to me, by telling me I was to suffer a great cross (though I never thought it would have proved so great, as afterwards I found it) and yet for all that I went chearfully, longing to enter presently into the lists, since it was our Lord's pleasure I should

should, and so his Majesty gave resolution and strength to my weakness. Yet I could not, as I said, well conceive how this might bé. I thought on this similitude: if I had in my possession a jewel, or any other thing with which I was very much taken, and should chance to know that one whom I loved much more than myself, and whose satisfaction I preferred before my own, did desire this same jewel, certainly I should rather choose to part with it than to keep it, because I should thereby please the party whom I so dearly loved; and as this delight I took in pleasing him, would exceed my own content in possessing it; so likewise would it remove the sorrow I might otherwise suffer in giving up that jewel, or any other thing that I loved, and the content I took therein. So that though I desired not to go, both for the conveniency I had for my prayers, in that lady's house, and for the not leaving persons, who, I perceived, so much resented my departure; which, as I am naturally very grateful, would at another time have served to afflict me extremely; yet at present though I should have a mind, I could not be sorry for my going.

"This dispatch, and my not deferring my journey one day longer, was of such consequence to the business of the new monastery, that I know not how it could possibly have been concluded, had I then delayed. O the immense greatness of God! I am many times astonished, when I consider and observe, in what particular manner his Majesty was pleased to help me to complete the founding of this *little closet of God*, (for such indeed I take it to be) and his abode wherein his Majesty; as he told me once in prayer, *that this monastery was the paradise o his delights.* So that it seems our Lord himself had picked out those souls, which he hath drawn to it, in whose company I now live with great confusion to myself; for I could not have known how to have wished

for

for such for this purpose, persons of such austerity, poverty and prayer; suffering all with that alacrity and content, that every one judgeth herself unworthy the honour of being admitted to such a place: especially some, whom our Lord hath brought hither from the many vanities and pomps of the world, whom he hath so far favoured, by redoubling their joys to them, that they plainly perceive they have already in this life received a hundred for one for all they have quitted; and therefore they are never satiated with rendering thanks to his divine Majesty. Others our Lord hath changed from good to better: to those that are but young he hath given courage and understanding, to desire no other thing but himself, and to know that, even here also, to live with the more quiet, they must separate themselves, and fly from all the things of this world. To those that are elder and infirm, he hath given, and continues to give strength, to be able to undergo the same austerity and penance as all the rest do.

"O my Lord, how evidently dost thou here manifest thy power! We need not seek out reasons for what thou hast a mind to bring to pass, since beyond all natural reason, thou makest things in such manner possible, as sufficiently to demonstrate that nothing more is required but only the loving thee sincerely, and forsaking in good earnest all for thy sake, that thou, O my Lord, mayest make every thing easy to us."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXVI.

The wonders of God in the establishment of the new monastery. The persecution the holy mother sustains on this occasion. The long and obstinate opposition of the city of Avila is overcome at last. The Saint is allowed by her Provincial to settle in her new foundation. (Chap. v.)

"BEING now got out of Toledo, I went very cheerfully on my journey, resolving most willingly to suffer whatever our Lord's pleasure was. The same evening that I arrived here at Avila, were brought the letters and the Breve from Rome, for erecting the monastery; so that both I, and all they that knew how much our Lord had hastened my coming, were astonished, when they saw the great need there was of it, and the conjuncture in which our Lord brought me to this place. For here I found the bishop, and the holy man Fr. Peter of Alcantara, and that other gentleman (Francis de Salsedo) that great servant of God, at whose house the holy man lodged. These two prevailed with the bishop to admit the monastery, which, as it was to have no revenue, was no small favour; but he was such a friend to those whom he saw so resolute in God's service, that he soon consented to the furthering of it. But the holy old man, Fr. Peter, was he that upon the point did all; and had I not come, as I said, in so fit a season, I cannot imagine how it could have been effected, for this holy man staid but a little while here, (as I take it, not full eight days, and in that time very sickly) and soon after our Lord took him to himself. And it seems his Majesty was pleased to keep him alive (for he had been ill for a long time,) till he had finished this business.

"All that related to this affair was carried on with great secrecy, for otherwise nothing could have been done, the people being so much against it, as afterwards was seen. Now it fell out by the providence and disposal of our Lord, that my kinsman (who had taken the house in his own name, and at present lived in it) fell sick, in the absence of his wife, and that so dangerously, that leave was granted me to go to him and to take care of him; and by this occasion nothing came to light; though there wanted not some who had a suspicion of what we were doing, but not an absolute belief of the thing. What was wonderful was, that he lay no longer sick than was needful for the business; and when it was requisite he should recover, that I might be quit of my attendance, and the house left clear and empty, our Lord on a sudden restored him to health, so that he himself admired it.

"The sick man being now recovered, I hastened him to clear the house, and the workmen to finish it with all speed, in such manner at least as that it might have some form of a monastery; for to the compleating of it a good deal was wanting. My companion the widow was not here, (for we thought it best she should be afar off, the more to disguise the matter) and I saw plainly the necessity of expedition and dispatch, for various reasons, of which one was, that I feared every hour I should be commanded back to my monastery of the Incarnation. The troubles I suffered here in the mean time were so many, that I began to think whether this were the cross mentioned to me; though it seemed a very light one in comparison of that heavier one, meant by our Lord, and prepared for me to suffer.

"So every thing being in readiness, it pleased our Lord that this monastery of our glorious father St. Joseph, should be established with full licence and autho-

rity

rity in the year 1562; and on St. Bartholomew's day certain maids took the habit, and the blessed Sacrament was there deposited. I was present to give them the habit, together with two others of our nuns of the Incarnation, who happened to be then abroad. For as to me, this having been the house that my kinsman dwelt in, I had leave to be there; and I did nothing at all, without taking the advice of the learned, that I might not in the least act against obedience. These assured me, that seeing the thing conduced so very much to the advantage and reputation of the whole order, I might lawfully do as I did, without letting my own superiors know of it. For if they had shewed me even the smallest imperfection in this my proceeding, I would have left a thousand monasteries, much more one: this is most certain. For though I was very desirous it should succeed, that so I might separate myself from all things, and follow my profession and vocation with greater perfection; yet I desired it so, that in the moment I should have understood it would be more for God's service totally to desert it, I should have done it with all tranquillity and chearfulness, as I had done before.

"I seemed now to be in a manner in heaven, to see the most holy Sacrament placed on the altar, and shelter afforded to four poor orphans, (for they were admitted without a dowry) who were great servants of God; for this was designed at the beginning, that the persons who were received in, should be such, who by their example, might prove a proper foundation to this new edifice, to answer our main end of much perfection and prayer; from whence might be continued a work, which I knew would tend to the service of God, and the honour of the habit of his glorious Mother; for this was my chief desire and care. Besides it gave me great consolation to see that now effected, which our Lord had so stricly en-

joined me, and one more church in this city (under the title of my glorious father St. Joseph) than formerly had been. Not that I, for my part, seemed to have done any thing therein; for I never had, nor have yet such a thought, but have always conceived that it was our Lord who did all, and that little which I for my share had effected, I knew was attended with so many imperfections, that I find I rather deserved censure and blame than applause or acceptance. But it gave me satisfaction and pleased me much, to consider that his Majesty had made use of me, being so very bad, for the instrument of so noble a work; and hereat I was so transported with joy, that I was, as it were, beside myself in profound prayer.

"All this being ended, some three or four hours after, the devil made a fierce assault upon me, after the following manner. He suggested a doubt to me, whether what I had been doing were not perhaps ill done; whether I entrenched not on obedience in attempting it without a command from Father Provincial, *&c.* He likewise made me question, whether those that lived here in such austerity, would not afterward repent of it; whether they might not want victuals, and whether the whole were not an extravagant attempt; and who put me upon it? Had I not a monastery of my own, *&c.* In fine, the charge our Lord had given me, the judgment of so many others whom I had consulted, the many prayers made on the occasion, (for I had done almost nothing else for almost two years) were now as clean vanished out of my mind as if there never had been any such thing, and all that I remembered was only that it was my fancy. All virtues, and even faith itself, stood now, as it were, suspended in me, so that I had not the power to exercise one of them, in such manner as to defend myself from these blows. He likewise represented to

me,

me, why would I shut myself in a monastery so strict, having so many infirmities? How should I be able to endure so great penance, and quit a house so spacious and pleasant, where I had lived so contentedly, and had so many friends? That perhaps these here would not prove to my mind; that I obliged myself to too much; that possibly this might throw me into despair; that, may be the devil had instigated me to this, in order to bereave me of my peace and quiet, and so to disable me from continuing my prayer; that being thus disturbed, I might at last lose my soul. These and the like things the devil presented before me altogether, so that I had no power to think on any thing else; and that with such an heaviness, obscurity and darkness in my soul, as I know not how to express. Finding myself in this condition, I went to visit the blessed Sacrament, though I was not able to recommend myself thereto, being in an agony, methought, like one in the pangs of death. To communicate this to any one, I neither durst nor might, because I had not as yet a confessor assigned me.

"O my sweet Jesus, what a miserable life is this, in which there is no secure contentment, nor any thing without change! But just now I was in so great joy, that to my thinking I would not have exchanged my content with any one living; and presently the same thing which gave me that joy, so tormented me, that I knew not what to do. O, if we did but carefully observe the passages of this life of ours, every one by experience would see how litttle he ought to esteem either its joys or its sorrows. Certainly this was one of the strongest and sharpest encounters I ever met with in all my life. But our Lord left not his poor servant in distress; for he ever supported me in all tribulations, and so he did in this; and he afforded me a little light to discern, that it was a temptation of the enemy, and that he did all this to

terrify

terrify me with his lies. Whereupon I began to call to mind the strong resolutions I had made of serving God, and the desires I had of suffering for his sake; and I considered, that if I meant to put them in execution, I must not seek after ease; that if I found troubles, there would be merit too; and that if in order to please and to honour God, I undertook them, they might serve me instead of purgatory. And what was I afraid of, since if I desired crosses, these were good large ones, and the more oppression I met with, the more gain it would be. And why wanted I courage to serve one to whom I was so much obliged? With these and other considerations, offering violence to myself, I promised before the most holy sacrament, to do my uttermost for procuring a licence to come and dwell in this monastery; and in case with good conscience I might, to vow perpetual enclosure. As I was doing and saying this, presently in the very instant the devil vanished, and I remained satisfied and quiet, and so have continued ever since. All that is observed in this house, with regard toenclosure, penance and other austerities, is become pleasant to me; and the content I have here is so great, that I know not any thing I could have chosen in the whole earth so savoury and delicious. I know not whether this be not partly the cause, that I have now better health than ever; or whether, because there was both necessity and reason, that I should do what all the rest did, our Lord would therefore bestow upon me this consolation, to enable me to do it, though it be with pain. Which ability of mine all those who know my infirmities do admire. Blessed be he who gives all, and to whom all things are possible.

"I went away very weary from this combat, laughing to myself at the devil, for I plainly saw it was he: and now being desirous to take a little rest after dinner, (for I had

had almost none all the night before, not to speak of the great weariness of all the precedent days) as soon as it was known in my monastery of the Incarnation, and in the town, what was done, there arose a great uproar and a general murmuring; and presently the prioress sent me a command to repair thither instantly. I understanding her pleasure, went immediately, leaving the nuns very disconsolate. I perceived well I should meet with troubles enough; but inasmuch as the house was now finished, I regarded them but little. I betook myself to prayer, humbly beseeching our Lord that he would help me, and my father Joseph, that he would bring me back to this monastery of his; offering up to him all that I was to suffer, and being exceeding glad, and desirous of an occasion of enduring something for his sake, and of serving him, I went thither, looking for nothing else but that they would presently put me in prison; though in my opinion that would have been a great ease to me, in regard that none would then discourse with me, and I should repose a while in solitude, which was what I had great need of: for the perpetual conversing with people had left me quite harassed, and as it were, ground even to dust.

"As soon as I came, I gave an account, as to what I had done, to the prioress, who was somewhat pacified; but they all sent for Father Provincial, that the business might be heard before him. When he was come, I was summoned to appear, being exceedingly pleased to see myself suffer something for the love of our Lord. For I did not find that herein I had offended his divine Majesty, nor done any thing against my order; but rather had endeavoured with all my power to promote its good, and for this would willingly have laid down my life; it being my whole desire that its first institution

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and rule might be observed in the highest perfection. I called to mind on this occasion the sentence passed on Christ, and I saw how that which I should lie under would be little or nothing. I acknowledged my fault to Father Provincial, as if I had been very guilty; and such I appeared to be to them that knew not all the circumstances. After he had sharply reprehended me, I would not excuse myself, because I was resolved to suffer; and therefore I desired he would pardon me and punish me, yet not to retain any displeasure against me. In some things I well enough saw they accused me wrongfully; for they objected that I had done all this with no other view than to get me a reputation, and the like; but in other things I understood evidently that they said true; as that I was the worst of all the nuns, and that having no better observed the religious discipline used in this monastery, how did I think to keep my rule and the constitutions with greater rigour in another? That I gave scandal to the people, and introduced novelties. All this, nothing troubled or disquieted me, though I made shew of being afflicted, lest I should seem to disregard or slight what they said to me. At last Father Provincial commanded me to declare there before the nuns my reasons, and to give an account of what I had done; saying that it was necessary I should do it: so forasmuch as I was quiet within myself, and our Lord assisted me, I laid before them my reasons in such manner, as that neither the Provincial nor the nuns who heard me, found cause to condemn me. I had discourse afterwards with father Provincial alone, and informed him more particularly of the success of the business, who rested well satisfied, and promised me, that if the foundation of the monastery went forward, and the city were quieted, he would grant me a licence to remove

move thither; for at present the tumult in the city was very great, as I shall now relate.

"Two or three days after, the governor and the officers of the city, together with some of the chapter assembled, and all jointly declared, they would by no means consent to the establishment of the monastery, it being a manifest detriment, as they thought, to the public, and therefore that the blessed sacrament should be taken away, &c. They appointed two divines to meet, out of every order, to deliver their opinion upon it; of whom some held their peace, others disliked the business, in fine they concluded the house should be presently dissolved. Only one, Father Dominick Bannez, a graduate of the order of St. Dominick, said there was no necessity of dissolving it so suddenly; that it ought to be more maturely considered of; that this affair belonged to the bishop, and the like. This was of great advantage, for they being so enraged, it was a chance but they had immediately thrown it down to the ground. In fine a monastery it was to be, because it so pleased our Lord, against whose will they all, though united, were able to do little. They proposed their reasons, moved with a good zeal; and so, though without offending God, they made me suffer; and all that favoured the business (for some such there were) sustained great persecutions. The murmuring and tumult of the people was so great, that there was no talk of any thing else: and they all blamed me, running to and fro continually, one while to the Provincial, another while to my monastery. I was no more moved at what they said against me, than if they had said nothing, but the fear lest the house should be dissolved, and the seeing those who assisted me, lose their credit, and the great molestation they endured, struck me to the heart. For as to their

their reports concerning me, I was rather glad, and if I had had but a little more faith, I should not in those other respects have felt the least alteration; but a small defect in this one virtue, was enough to lay asleep all the rest. Hereupon I was much afflicted for those two days, wherein those meetings of the people were held: upon which occasion our Lord said to me: *Dost thou not know that I am mighty? What fearest thou? Be assured the monastery shall not be dissolved: I will accomplish all that I have promised thee.* With which words I was much comforted.

"Meanwhile they informed the king's council of the whole proceeding, and an order came, that a relation also should be drawn up on our part, how this monastery was founded. Thus a great suit was commenced, and as in favour of the city some were gone to court, it was fitting, that in behalf of the monastery somebody should also go. Now money we had none, nor knew I what to do. It was God's providence that Father Provincial never commanded me to desist from prosecuting the business, though he would not grant me a licence to remove to the new house, till he saw what the issue would be. Those four servants of God continued alone, and did more by their prayers than I by all my solicitations, though it was but necessary to use the utmost diligence. Sometimes all seemed lost; especially one day before father Provincial was come, it happened that Mother Prioress commanded me not to attempt or engage in any thing about this business, which was in effect to throw up all. I went to his divine Majesty, and said to him: *Lord, this monastery is none of mine, it is made for thee; therefore since there is none to follow the business, let thy Majesty undertake it, and do all.* Which when I had said, I was in as great repose,

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and as void of care, as though I had had all the world to negotiate for me, and presently I reckoned the business as done.

A priest named Gonzalo de Aranda, a great servant of God, and friend to all perfection, who had always assisted me, went to the court to attend the business, and prosecuted it vigorously; and that devout gentleman, Francis de Salsedo, laboured herein exceedingly, and promoted it to his uttermost, not without many difficulties and persecutions. I always in all things esteemed, and still esteem him as a father. God's assistance to a certain priest (Doctor Daza), one of these that much befriended me in this affair, was evidently seen; when in another great assembly and consultation held in the city, he in behalf of the bishop appeared, and opposed himself alone against the sentiments of all the rest, in such manner, that in the end he pacified them, by proposing to them certain expedients, which served to suspend at least their design, and to stop their fury for the present. But nothing prevailed to make them wholly desist, but they soon returned again to the charge, as if they would even lay down their lives, as I may say, for the dissolving of the monastery. This servant of God was he, who gave the first four nuns the habit, and placed there the blessed sacrament, for which he underwent very great persecution. This opposition lasted almost half a year, and it would be too tedious to recount in particular the great difficulties we sustained in all that time. I was astonished to see what mischief the devil was working against a few poor contemptible women, and how it could seem to all, that these should be so great a detriment to the city; as they were to be no more than twelve nuns and a prioress, and those of such austere lives. For, supposing any error or damage therein, it would all light upon

upon themselves; but that there should be any loss or prejudice to the city, there was no probability.

" At length they began to relent, and they came to this conclusion, that in case the monastery were endowed, they would admit it, and be content it should go forward. I was now so weary with seeing the trouble of all those that assisted us, more than my own, that conceiving it might not be amiss to receive rents till they were quiet, and afterwards to lay them aside, I began to condescend to this accord. The night before it was to be concluded, as I was in prayer, our Lord said to me: *Daughter, make no such agreement as this; for if once ye begin to admit of a revenue, they will not afterward consent to your laying it down.* The same night appeared to me the holy man, F. Peter of Alcantara, who died but a little before, and who had written to me before his death, hearing of the great opposition and persecution we suffered, that he was very glad this house was founded with so much opposition, for it was a sign our Lord would be much served and honoured therein, since the devil took such pains to hinder it, and that I should by no means consent to have it endowed; inculcating this twice or thrice to me in the same letter, with great earnestness; assuring me that if I persisted resolute and constant herein, all should succeed according as I desired. I had already seen him two other times since his death, and the glory which he enjoyed; and so I was not at all affrighted, for he always appeared to me in the manner of a glorious body, full of splendor, and the beholding him delighted me exceedingly. At this time he discovered to me something of rigour, and only bid me by no means take revenue, and why would I not follow his counsel? and presently he vanished, leaving me much amazed. The next day I presently acquainted

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the forementioned gentleman (Salsedo) with what had passed, and that he should in no wise yield to the taking of rents, but go on with the suit. Our Lord helped me in all things; for it is impossible for me, writing thus succinctly, to declare all that was endured in the two years space from the time that this monastery began till it was finished; only this last half year and the first were the most troublesome.

"At length all was concluded though it cost me some pains, by a breve, which was brought me from Rome, prohibiting this monastery to be ever capable of receiving rents. And now being much pleased to see it thus finished, and reflecting on the troubles we had undergone, and praising our Lord, that he had vouchsafed in any thing to make use of me, I began to consider the things that had happened; and indeed in every one of them that seemed of any importance, and which was done by me, I found many defects and imperfections, and sometimes but little courage, and often little faith. Yet to this present, wherein I see all fulfilled that our Lord hath told me concerning this monastery, I never failed resolutely to believe it, nor could I so much as doubt of it. In fine, all the good that hath been done, I found our Lord had done it, and I all the ill; whereupon I forbore to think any further on it, that I might not review my so numerous defects. Blessed be he, who when he pleases, draws good out of all. *Amen.*

"The city being now something quieted, father Peter Ivannez the Dominican made all speed to come to Avila, who had also assisted us in his absence. His divine Majesty brought him hither in a conjuncture wherein we most needed him. He staid here as long as was necessary for the appeasing the minds of many, and did much good by the great esteem they had of his learning

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and virtue. At his departure he procured that Father Provincial gave me a licence to remove to this monastery, taking some other nuns of the Incarnation along with me, to govern and instruct the novices that were there. The day of our entrance was a day of very great consolation to me. As I was praying in the church, being, as it were, in an extacy, I saw Christ our Lord, who methought received me with kindness and affection, putting a rich crown on my head, and in a manner thanked me for what I had done for his Mother. Another time, when all the nuns were at prayer in the quire after Complin, I saw the blessed Virgin our lady in very great glory, who seemed to receive and protect us all under a pure white robe, which she then had on; whereby I understood how high a degree of glory our Lord would bestow upon the Religious of this house. And now the divine office beginning here to be celebrated, the people began also to have a great devotion to this monastery; and our Lord began to move such as most opposed us, exceedingly to favour us; acknowledging now that they are sensible this work was of God, since notwithstanding so much opposition, his divine Majesty was pleased it should go forward.

"We observe the rule of our Lady of Mount Carmel, made by Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem; and this in all its strictness and integrity, as it was confirmed by Pope Innocent IV. anno 1248. Methinks all the troubles we sustained for it are well bestowed; for though it seem somewhat rigorous (in regard that we never eat flesh except in sickness, and we fast for eight months together, with some other things, as in the primitive rule may be seen), yet in many things also the sisters account it not severe enough, and therefore observe certain things besides, which for the keeping the rule in greater perfec-

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tion, seem to us necessary. I hope in our Lord, that what is thus begun will go on and encrease, as his divine Majesty hath promised me.

" The other monastery, which that holy woman I spoke of, procured to be erected, was likewise favoured by our Lord, and founded at Alcala; though she also met with strong opposition and suffered great difficulties. I know that in it is observed our primitive rule with all the same strictness and devotion as in this. I believe your Reverence will be tired with the long relation I have here made; but it is very short in comparison of the many crosses endured, and the wonders which our Lord hath wrought for us, of which there are divers witnesses thet can swear to them. And since our Lord hath been pleased so particularly to express his owning this work, I conceive they will do very ill, and shall be severely punished by God, that shall dare to attempt any relaxation of that perfection which our Lord hath here established, and to which he hath afforded his assistance in such a manner as that it is carried on with great delight; from whence it is evident, that it is very tolerable, and may with ease be practised, (there being so great helps) by all such as desire to enjoy their spouse Jesus Christ, the only thing they are here to pretend to, and to continue in this solitude with him alone."

This relation, contained in these five chapters, of the foundation of the monastery of St. Joseph of Avila, was written by the holy Mother, by the command of Father Garzia de Toledo, of the order of St. Dominick, who was then her confessor, anno 1562. After which, in the year 1573, she was commanded by Father Ripalda S. J. (her confessor during her stay at Salamanca) to write the foundations of seven other manasteries, which by that time she had erected, as also an account of the original of the convents of the discalced fathers of the same institute.

stitue. The rest of her foundations she afterward wrote, as she proceeded in founding, ending with Burgos, which was the last. We shall now carry on the history of her life, with the helps which this book of her foundations affords us, selecting only what appears most remarkable in them, and remitting such as desire to be more fully informed of all other particulars, to the book itself.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXVII.

After five years abode in her new monastery of Avila, the holy mother is licensed by the General of the Order to erect other monasteries of nuns, and to found two convents of discalced Friars. She found the monastery of Medina del Campo; and engages Antony of Jesus, and John of the cross, to embrace the primitive institute. Foundations Chap. vi.

" I LIVED, says the holy mother, five years in the monastery of St. Joseph of Avila, after it was erected, which as far as now appears to me, I account the quietest time of my life; the want of repose and tranquillity my soul now often relents. In this time there came in several gentlewomen to become religious, being very young, whom in all appearance the world made sure for its own, as their curious dress, and their pomps and vanities discovered: but our Lord soon set their hearts at liberty from these empty toys, and brought them home to himself, endowing them with such high perfection, as was a great confusion to me.—I took extreme delight to converse amongst such holy and pure souls; seeing that all their care was only to serve and praise our Lord. In the mean while his Divine Majesty sent us in what was necessary, without our asking; and if at any time we were in want, which was very seldom, their joy was so much the greater, &c.

" I lived then amongst the these angelical souls, for such they appeared to me, since they concealed from me no imperfection whatsoever, were it never so infernal. But who can express their disengagement from all earthly things; their ardent longings to serve his Divine Majesty,

and the exceeding great favours our Lord hath done them? Solitude was their recreation; so that they have assured me, that they were never satisfied with being alone and retired; and that they took it for a great torment to be visited by any from abroad, though they were their own brothers. She that had the most time to stay in one of the little hermitages, which we have made in our garden, esteemed herself the most happy. Whilst I was reflecting upon the great value of these souls, and the courage God had given them to suffer, and to serve him, which was certainly beyond that of women, I thought many times that these rich graces, which our Lord had laid up in them, were for some singular end. Not that what afterward happened came then into my mind, there not appearing the least ground for me to imagine a thing, which then seemed impossible; although my desires, as time run further on, grew still stronger, by which I longed to be able to do something for the good of my soul. Methought it was with me as with one, that had a very great treasure in his keeping, and desired that all should share therein, but had his hands tied, so that he could not distribute it; so my soul seemed, as it were bound up: for the favours God did me those years were very admirable, and I reckoned them all ill bestowed upon me. I strove to serve our Lord with my poor prayers, and continually laboured with the sisters that they would do the same, and zealously endeavour at the good of souls and the increase of the holy church: whence also it came to pass, that whosoever conferred with them was exceedingly edified; and herein I rested, and my impetuous desires were in some measure allayed and satisfied.

" After four years, or somewhat more, there happened to come to see me, a religious man, of St. Francis's order, called Fr. Alfonsus Maldonat, a great servant of God,

God, having the same desires as I had for the good of souls; but he was able also to put them in execution, in which I envied him extremely. This father came lately from the Indies, and began to tell me that divers millions of souls were lost in those countries, for want of instruction; and he made us a good sermon upon this subject, encouraging us to penance, and so departed. I remained so afflicted at the loss of so many souls, that I was besides myself. Thereupon I went to one of our hermitages, and shedding abundance of tears, I cried to our Lord, beseeching him, that he would furnish some means, by which I might gain over some souls to his service; seeing the devil drew away such a multitude from him; and that my prayers might prevail something towards it, since I was good for nothing else. I envied them exceedingly, who were able freely to spend themselves herein, for the love of God, though they underwent the extremest difficulties, and suffered a thousand deaths. Whence also it befalls me, that as often as we read in the Lives of the Saints, that they converted souls, it breeds in me more devotion, tenderness and emulation, than all the martyrdoms they suffered: in regard that our Lord hath given me this inclination, and that I conceive, he values more one soul, which through his mercy, we gain to him, by our prayers, than all the other services we can do him. Being in prayer one evening, in this extreme affliction, our Lord appeared to me, and expressing much affection, as willing to comfort me, said to me, *wait a while, daughter, and thou shalt see great matters.* Which words were so imprinted in my heart, that I could not put them out of my thoughts; and though could not conjecture, with much musing thereon, what these matters should be, yet I was nevertheless exceedingly comforted, and well assured, that in

the sequel they should be verified; but how and by what means, never came into my head.

" Another half year run out after this, when behold a thing that had never happened before, the general of the order, (says the Saint, Chap. vii.) whose ordinary residence is at Rome, came to Avila, conducted hither by divine providence. At hearing of this, I was troubled at first, fearing he would be displeased with me for not having subjected this monastery to the order, and that he would command me to return to the monastery of the incarnation, in which the rule is mitigated.—But our Lord disposed hereof better than I imagined; for the F. General (John Baptist Rossi) was so great a servant of his, and so discreet and learned, that he accounted this new foundation a good work; and for the rest discovered not to me the least dislike.—I procured therefore that he should come to St. Josephs, and I gave him an account of the foundation, and in a manner of my whole life (though it were very bad) with all truth and simplicity; he comforted me much—and was exceeding glad to see our way of living, and a lively (though imperfect) image of the first original of our order; and how the primitive rule was here observed with all rigour, which was done no where else. Out of the great desire he had that this small beginning should go forward, he gave me very ample patents for erecting more monasteries, with injunctions to the provincials, that none of them should hinder me therein. These I asked not of him; but he of his own accord granted them to me, as knowing—the extreme desire I had of being an instrument, that some souls might approach nearer to God, and be united to him by love. But as to these means of bringing this about (by patents for erecting monasteries) I had no thoughts of procuring them from him; nay, rather they seemed a kind of folly to me: for I well enough knew,

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that a woman so contemptible, and having so little authority as I, could do nothing—only that, when such desires as these seize upon the soul, by reason of the passionate longing she hath to please God, and the faith she hath in him, his Majesty makes that possible which to natural reason appears impossible. Whereupon in seeing the exceeding forwardness of our most reverend F. General for my founding more monasteries, methought I saw them already finished; and calling to mind the words, which our Lord had spoken to me before in prayer; I now discovered some beginning of that which before I could not understand.

" Before our General went away, the Lord Bishop Don Alvarez de Mendoza, a great friend and patron of such as he seeth to aim at serving God, with higher perfection, desired he would leave a licence with him, to erect in his diocese some convents of discalced friars of the first rule. The General was willing to grant it, but finding some opposition in the order, lest it might cause any disturbance in the province, he forbore for that time. Some days passed, when considering how necessary it was if I erected monasteries of religious women, that there should be some also of men that observed the same rule—and earnestly recommending the business to our Lord, I wrote a letter to our F. General, wherein I intreated him, after the best manner I could, to grant it: alleging certain reasons, which shewed the eminent service, that would thereby be done to Almighty God,—upon which he sent me a licence from Valentia, where he then was, for founding two convents—and lest there might be any contradiction, he remitted this matter to the present, and the preceding provincial. The obtaining their consent was a thing very difficult; but as soon as I saw the principal thus effected, I had great hopes our Lord would complete the rest; and so it fell out, for

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by the Lord Bishop's means, who followed the business close, as if it had been his own, both the provincials gave their consent.

" And now this licence being procured, my care also increased, from the not having any one of our Friars in all the province (whom I knew, or could hear of, fit for our turn, to put it in execution, nor any secular willing to begin it: hereupon I did nothing but cry to our Lord, that, if it were his pleasure, he would raise up one at least to begin the work. House I had none, nor means to get one; so that here was a poor discalced nun, without the assistance of any person, except our Lord, furnished only with patents and good desires, without any possibility of accomplishing them. However my courage did not fail me, nor the confidence I had, that our Lord having granted one thing, would likewise bestow the other. Upon this I conceived all was now possible, and so began to set about it."

Here the holy mother inserts her account of the foundation of the monastery of St. Joseph in Medina del Campo, her first enterprise of this kind: which although it was undertaken, with little or no appearance of success, or any human means to effect it; and therefore was taxed of folly and extravagance, even by her friends and well-wishers, was nevertheless happily concluded by the blessing of our Lord; in a manner which he himself was pleased to stile miraculous. As the Saint testifies (in the appendix or additions to her Life) where she relates that our Lord Jesus Christ, appearing to her, as soon as she had communicated, at Malagon, amongst other things which he said to her, bade her write the foundations of these houses. " Upon which, as she was thinking with herself, that in the foundation of Medina she knew of nothing remarkable to write. Our Lord asked her, what she desired to see more, since its foundation was miraculous?

culous? meaning that he alone had effected it, when to her (and to others) it seemed impossible, he giving her nevertheless the resolution, to put it in execution."

The blessed mother was attended in this, and most of the rest of her foundations, by Mr. Julian d'Avila, a holy priest, of whom she writes, in her account of the founding of this monastery, ' That he was a great servant of God, and much disengaged from the things of the world, and also of much prayer; that he was the chaplain of her monastery (of Avila) and assisted her much, God having given him the same desires as he had to her, for promoting his glory, and the salvation of souls."

Here also the holy mother takes occasion of speaking of the great favours our Lord began to bestow upon he nuns of this, and of the rest of her first monasteries; and thereupon lays down some directions, touching these matters. " As those little dove cotes, say she, Chap 9. of the B. Virgin, our lady, began to fill, the Divine Majesty also began to discover his greatnesses in these poor weak women, though strong in their desires, and in their (resolute) disengaging themselves from all created things; for this it is, that chiefly unites a soul to its Creator, walking with purity of conscience; for without this separation from creatures, it seems to me impossible not to offend our Lord. But as all their discourses and conversation is only concerning the things of God; so it seems he is not willing to keep away from them, so as not to offord them his delightful presence. This is what I now see, and can affirm of a truth. Let them who shall come after, and read this, fear: and if they see not then, what we now find here, let them not impute it to the times; since it is always a time for God to confer favours, and great rewards, on such as serve him in earnest; but let them endeavour to discover, whether

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in this thing there be any breach or failing in them, and amend it.

" But to return to what I was saying, the favours our Lord doth in these monasteries are so great that they astonish me; for he conducts them all by mental prayer; and some attain to perfect contemplation; others are advanced forward so far as to arrive at extacies and raptures; to others our Lord doth favours of another kind, bestowing on them also revelations and visions, such, as it is manifestly discerned, do proceed from God. There is never a one of those monasteries at this day, wherein are not found either one, or two, or three such. Not that I think sanctity to consist herein, but to let it appear that the advices I desire here to give, are not beside the purpose.

" And here the holy mother lays down several directions touching these matters of prayer and of the spirit. And first she tells her daughters, that perfect prayer consists not so much in thinking as it does in loving; that all indeed are not able to keep their thoughts strongly fixed on God, nor to be always meditating on his works; and that all imaginations are not fit for this, but to love all are fit. Hence the proficiency of the soul, says she, consists not in much thinking, but rather in much loving. And if you ask me how this love is got, I answer, by resolving to do and to suffer for God; and afterward in effect doing so, when occasion shall be offered. She adds, that works of obedience and charity to our neighbours are not to be neglected for the sake of enjoying the sweets of a more retired and quiet prayer. For that this would be but an illusion of a more refined self-love, and a seeking to please ourselves rather than God; that the highest perfection consists in a conformity of our will to God's, and that obedience is the shortest way to

happiness;

happiness; that sometimes a better disposition for enflaming the soul with the love of God, and attaining even to the height of perfection, may be found in the outward employments of obedience and charity, when rightly performed, than in the solitude of prayer and meditation, which she shews by some instances. Chap. 10.

" Such a one, says she, was that person whom I spoke with a few days ago, who for the space of fifteen years, was by obedience so detained in offices and government, and thereby so harassed out, that in all that time he remembered not to have had one day free to himself; although he still procured, the best he could, some little spare time every day for mental prayer, and for the purifying his conscience. A soul is this, the most addicted to obedience that ever I saw, insomuch that he even imprints the same on all he converses with. Our Lord hath abundantly rewarded him, for without his knowing how, he enjoys that inestimable treasure of liberty of spirit, which the perfect only have, in which consists all the happiness that can be wished in this life; for desiring nothing he possesseth all. Such souls neither fear nor covet any thing of this world: crosses do not disturb them, nor do pleasures or prosperity soften them. In fine, there is nothing that can rob them of their peace, which depends on God alone; and since nothing can take away God from them, the fear of losing nothing except him can afflict them. For every thing else, in their opinion, is as if it had no being at all; since nothing thereof raises or destroys their content.

" O happy obedience, O happy distraction, which is caused by that which enriches us with so great a treasure. Nor is this the only person; for I have known others in like manner, whose whole time for many years,

I perceived,

I perceived, was spent in works of obedience and charity, whom on the other side I saw nevertheless so very much improved and advanced in spiritual matters, as made me wonder. When therefore obedience calls you, my daughters, to exterior employments, for example in the kitchen, let there be no neglect, and assure yourselves that our Lord will go along with you, assisting you both in the interior and exterior, amidst the very pots and dishes.

"I remember a religious man told me, he had made a firm resolution never to object against any thing enjoined him by his superior, whatever trouble it might put him to. Now one day it fell out, that being quite tired, and so spent with labour that he could not stand on his legs, as he was about to rest himself, it being almost night, and had sat down a little, his prior came, and bade him take the spade and go dig in the garden. He made no reply (though so faint that he could not work) but took the spade; and as he was going through a certain passage, by which they entered into the garden, (which I myself saw some years after, upon occasion of my founding a monastery in the town) Christ our Lord appeared to him with his cross on his shoulders, so weary and spent, as made him sufficiently understand, that what he then suffered was nothing in comparison with the sufferings of his Saviour."

The Saint adds a great deal more, in commendation of the works of obedience and charity, and of the excellence of a perfect conformity of our will with the will of God. After which, for the direction of her daughters, she lays down some rules for the distinguishing between certain suspensions or swoonings away, arising from corporal weakness, or from a fixed imagination, and true raptures or extasies; she declares also the harm that

may

may befal spiritual persons, by not understanding when they are to resist and when not, what seems to be the spirit, and the great desires a soul may sometimes have for the holy communion, and the delusion there may be therein; how also the prioresses are to treat those that are melancholic, with some directions concerning revelations and visions, and the preventing such delusions as may happen in them: and concludes that those are most to be encouraged in religion, who advance most in humility, in the mortification of their own will and in obedience, and not that they have extasies, visions or revelations.

Whilst the holy mother was occupied in the foundation of the monastery of Medina, she was not unmindful of that other great work, for which also she had obtained a licence, viz. the erecting some convents of religious men, who might follow the same institute. And here our Lord furnished her with two proper subjects for beginning this establishment. But let us hear what she herself writes on this subject, (Chap. v.) "I was very solicitous, says she, for having some of the like convents of religious men, but wanting one to begin the business, I knew not what to do. At last I resolved to treat about it privately, with the Prior of the Carmelites of Medina, Fr Antony de Heredia, afterward called Antony of Jesus, to see what he would advise me: and so I did. He was exceedingly glad when he understood it, and promised me that himself would be the first. Which when I heard, I took for a jest, and so I told him; because though he was ever a good man in his Order, retired, studious, and a lover of his cell, yet I did not think that he was a man for the purpose to begin such an establishment; nor that he had a spirit and strength enough to go through with the rigour and austerity of life

life that was requisite, he being so very tender, and unaccustomed to so severe penance. But he assured me it was otherwise, and certified me, that it was a good while since our Lord had called him to a stricter life; and also that he had already purposed to become a Carthusian, and that the fathers of that Order had told him they would admit him. For all this I was not fully satisfied, though I was glad to hear it; and I entreated him that we might stay a while, and he in the mean time make trial of himself in the things of which he was to vow the observance. He did so, and spent a year in this manner, wherein he underwent such troubles and persecutions, by false accusations, as sufficiently discovered that our Lord meant to try him; yet he bore all so courageously, and went on advancing so much in spirit, that I greatly praised our Lord, thinking his divine Majesty was hereby disposing him for this work.

"A little after, another father of our Order chanced to come hither, a young man, and a student at Salamanca, whose name was Fr. John of the Cross. He came as a companion to another religious man, who related strange things to me concerning him. I rendered thanks to the divine Majesty, and in discoursing with him he gave me great satisfaction. I understood by him, that he was also minded to enter into the Carthusians Order, whereupon I immediately acquainted him with my design, and earnestly entreated him to defer, till our Lord gave us a convent; representing the great good it would be, if he desired to reform, to endeavour it in his own Order; and that he would much more serve our Lord thereby. He promised me to do so, if the business were not put off too long, and did not prove too tedious. And now when I saw I had gotten

two

two friars already, to begin with, methought the work was done: though concerning F. Prior Antonio, I was not yet altogether satisfied; and so for this reason, as likewise for want of a place to begin such a convent in, I was glad there was some delay." So far the holy Mother.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXVIII.

She founds the monasteries of Malagon and Valladolid: The saintly life and death of a nun of this latter place. Chap. 14, 15, and 16.

"BEING now at St. Joseph's of Medina del Campo, I took great delight to see that these sisters walked in the same steps as those of St. Joseph's of Avila, and with every way the like religious observance, unity and spirit; and that our Lord failed not to provide his house with what was necessary, by the coming in of some, whom, it seemed, he himself had made choice of, as well suiting for the foundation of such a fabric. For I was well assured, that on these good beginnings depended all that good which was to follow, since those that came after, walk in the way which they find marked out and beaten by them that came first.

"In the mean time the countess de la Cerda (the lady in whose house, by my superior's command, I had lived so long) understanding that I had a licence for erecting monasteries, began to importune me exceedingly, to found one in a town of hers, called Malagon. I would by no means admit thereof, in regard that the place was so little, that of necessity it must have a revenue settled on it, to be able to maintain itself; a thing which I was extremely averse from. I consulted about it with some learned men, and with Dominic Bannez, a confessor of mine, who told me I did ill; for since the holy council of Trent permitted rents to be taken, there was no just ground of refusing the erecting of a monastery (wherein our Lord might be so much served) for the

enjoying

enjoying my own opinion or particular content. To which were added the many entreaties and importunities of this lady, so that I could do no less than admit this monastery. The lady settled upon it a sufficient revenue; but all possible diligence was used, that no one in particular should possess any thing, and that the nuns here should observe the constitutions in all points, in the same manner as in those other monasteries founded in poverty.

"All the writings being drawn, I sent for some of the nuns to erect the foundation; and on Palm Sunday, 1565, all the people of the place came in procession to receive us: and we putting our white mantles on, and covering our faces with our veils, went to the town-church, where we heard mass and a sermon. Passing from thence processionally, with the most holy sacrament, we arrived at our monastery and church, where with great solemnity it was set up, which excited much devotion in all the people. When I had tarried here some days, being in prayer, after I had communicated, I understood by revelation from our Lord, that he was to be greatly served in this monastery. I continued here about two months only, for my spirit hastened me to be gone for the founding the monastery of Valladolid; the reason of which I shall now relate.

"Four or five months before the founding of the monastery of St. Joseph in Malagon, a young gentleman of quality (Don Bernardino de Mendoza, brother of the Bishop of Avila, discoursing with me, told me, that if I would erect a monastery in Valladolid, he would very willingly bestow on me, for this purpose, a house he had there, with a very fair and spacious garden adjoining, and that he would put me in possession thereof presently, though it were of a great value. I accepted it, though

though I was not absolutely resolved to found the monastery there, in regard that the place was about a mile distant from the city: but I knew that possession being once taken, it would be an easy matter afterward to go to the city; and since the donor likewise did it so freely, I would not refuse to accept so pious a work, nor give a check to his devotion. About two months after, he was taken with a disease so sudden and so violent that it deprived him of his speech, so that he could not well make his confession, though he shewed many signs of contrition. He died in a very short time, at a great distance from the place where I then was. Our Lord told me, *that very happily he was in a state of salvation, that he had mercy on him for the service done to his blessed Mother, in bestowing that house to be made a monastery of her order; and that his soul should not pass out of purgatory, till the first mass were said there, and that then it should straight ascend into glory.* The excessive torments that I understood this soul endured, were so continually present to my thoughts, that though I desired to erect a house in Toledo, I forbore as yet, and made all the haste I could to found that at Valladolid.

"It could not be dispatched so soon as I desired, because I was forced to stay divers days at St. Joseph's of Avila, (where I was prioress) and afterward it being meet I should pass through Medina del Campo, I was obliged to stay some days longer in the monastery there. Being here one day in prayer, our Lord bid me make haste, because that soul suffered greatly. Whereupon, though I was not well prepared, I would needs be gone, and on St. Laurence's day I arrived at Valladolid. When I saw the house I felt a great affliction, for I perceived it was ridiculous to think the nuns could dwell there, without excessive charge, and that though it were otherwise very

convenient,

convenient, it could not but be unwholesome, because the river ran by it. Yet I said nothing of this to my companions, lest I should discourage them; for I had always a faith, though a weak one, that our Lord, who had told me what I have above related, would provide some remedy. So I very privately got some workmen together, and made them begin walls, that the house might have a proper enclosure, and whatever else was necessary. There was with us our chaplain, Julian d'Avila, and Father John of the Cross, whom I took care continually to inform and acquaint with the manner of life observed in these our monasteries. Our chaplain was employed about getting a licence from the bishop, which could not be procured before the Sunday; but in the mean time the vicar gave us one for the saying mass in the place, which we had designed for a church: and hereupon it was said. I was far from thinking that what was spoken to me about that soul, should be fulfilled at this time, because though it was revealed to me, that it should fall out upon the saying the first mass, yet I conceived that this was meant of that mass, wherein the most holy sacrament should be set up.

"As soon as the priest came where we were to communicate, with the blessed sacrament in his hand, as I approached to receive it, I saw by the side of the priest, that gentleman I spoke of, standing before me, with a resplendent and cheerful countenance, and with his hands joined together, thanking me very much for that which I had done for him, to the freeing him out of purgatory; after which his soul went immediately to heaven. Indeed when first I understood of his being in the state of salvation, I was very glad; because when I heard of his death, and the suddenness of it, I was in a manner hopeless, and extreme sad, fearing least that

soul might be damned; it seeming to me that his course of life required another kind of death; for although he had some good qualities, yet he remained immersed in the things of the world; though it is true he told my companions that he accounted his death very near. Praised and blessed be our Lord, whose mercy is so great, and who is so much pleased with any kind of service which is done to his mother, and who thus rewards with eternal life and glory the meanness of our works, and renders them great, which of themselves are of so poor a value.

"The day of our Lady's Assumption being come, (1568) we took possession of this monastery; but we continued there but a little while, because we fell all extremely ill, which the Lady Maria de Mendoza (sister of the deceased gentleman) seeing, and being very devout and exceeding charitable, as the abundant alms bestowed by her do witness; instead of that house which she took for herself, purchased a much better for us in the city, besides furnishing us with all necessaries, as she continues to do to this day. To this new house we removed on St. Blasius's day, with a solemn procession, and great devotion of the people, which continues still; for our Lord shews great mercy to this monastery, bringing thither persons, whose sanctity in its due time will be recorded to the glory and praise of our Lord, who by such means is pleased to aggrandize his works, and confer favours on his creatures.

"Amongst others, there was admitted for a nun in this monastery, a young damsel called Beatrice Ognez, whose soul made all astonished to see what our Lord hadwrought in her, adorning her with eminent virtues. For the nuns and the prioress all affirm, that all the time she lived amongst them, they never discerned in her any thing

thing that could be judged an imperfection, nor ever observed her, for whatever accident, to alter her looks, but always shewing a modest cheerfulness, an evident argument of that inward joy which her soul possessed. Her silence was no way morose or offensive, nor was it such as could be taxed of singularity. It was never known that she spoke a word that had any thing in it to be reprehended; nothing of obstinacy was seen in her, nor did she at any time excuse herself, though sometimes to try her, they blamed her for things she had not done. She never complained of any thing, nor of any of the sisters; nor either by word or look did she ever displease any one in whatever business she was employed. She never gave occasion of suspicion of any imperfection at all in her, nor was there any accusation against her in the chapter, concerning the least defect, although the smallest and most minute matters are by the zealous observed and mentioned there. In all things the composure both of her interior and exterior, was admirable, which proceeded from a strong apprehension she had of eternity, and of the end for which God made us. Nothing came out of her mouth but the praises of God, and the highest expressions of gratitude to him; in a word, her life was one continued prayer. In point of obedience she committed not the least defect, but with great promptness, perfection and alacrity, observed whatever was enjoined her. She had a most ardent charity for her neighbour, insomuch that she often said she could be content, for the sake of any one of them, to be cut in a thousand pieces, that they might not lose their souls, but might come to enjoy her dear brother Jesus Christ, for so she used to call our Lord, in the midst of all her afflictions, and those most terrible sicknesses and racking pains, which, as I shall now relate,

she so long endured, and that with as much willingness and content, as if they had been the greatest delight: and such, no doubt, our Lord communicated to her in spirit, for it would otherwise have been impossible for her to have borne her sufferings with that cheerfulness as she did.

"It happened once that in the city of Valladolid, they were leading some persons to execution for some enormous crimes. At which time, she understanding that they went not so well prepared and fitted to die as became them, was thereby so extremely afflicted, that she presently repaired to our Lord with great grief, and besought him very earnestly for the salvation of those souls; and to the end she might obtain this request, she begged, that instead of what they deserved, he would send her all her life-time, as many miseries and torments as she was able to bear. That very night her first fever took her, and to her death she went on continually suffering. But as to those malefactors, it was afterward known that they died in very good dispositions, whereby it seems God had heard her prayer. Besides, she had an impostume in her bowels, with such excessive pains, that to be able to endure them with patience, she had need of all the fortitude with which our Lord had endued her soul. This impostumation being inward, the remedies and medicines which they applied to her, helped not at all, till it pleased our Lord that it began to break and cast out corruption, and so she grew somewhat better of this distemper.

"The desire she had of suffering made that she was not content with a little pain; and upon hearing a sermon one day concerning the cross, this desire increased so, that going thence in a great passion of weeping, she threw herself upon her bed, and being asked what she ailed,

ailed; she answered, *that they should pray to God to give her store of sufferings, and so she should be at ease, and rest contented.* She conferred faithfully with the prioress, concerning all matters of her interior, and in this received consolation. In all her sickness she never made shew of the least discontent in the world, and she did neither more nor less in any thing, but as the infirmarian would have her. For souls that have the gift of prayer, to desire afflictions and to delight to suffer them, (as she did) is not the case of many. When she was already so spent with sickness, that her life was drawing towards an end, (for besides her other extreme tortures, she had an impostume in her throat, so that she could not swallow) she told the prioress, who offered to comfort her, and encourage her to bear so grievous a malady, that she felt no pain at all, nor would change her condition with any of the sisters who were in perfect health. She had such an apprehension of the presence of that Lord, for the love of whom she suffered, that as much as she could she dissembled her pains, and turned away, that they might not perceive how very much she endured. It seemed to her that there was not to be found upon earth any thing worse than herself, and in every thing, as far as could be discerned, her humility was wonderful. When she heard any on speaking of the virtues of others, she was overjoyed thereat. In point of mortifications she was immoderate, and by certain artifices she avoided, and withdrew herself from whatsoever might afford her any recreation; which, one that was not very expert, and did not narrowly observe her, could not perceive. She seemed not to live, nor converse with creatures, she so undervalued all things; for howsoever matters went, she received all with such a calmness, that they always beheld her in the same temper.

"She

"She referred all her pains and all her service to such an end, as not to suffer herself to lose any part of the merit of them. To which effect she said to the sisters, *There is no price can recompense a thing, be it never so small, that is done for the love of God. We should not, sisters, so much as turn our eyes, but only for this end, and that we may do a thing acceptable to him.* She never meddled in a matter that concerned her not, and therefore she discerned no one's defects but her own. She took such displeasure that any good should be spoken of her, that upon this account the nuns were cautious of discoursing on this subject in her presence, lest they might afflict her. She never procured to herself any consolation, either by going into the garden, or any other thing; for (as she sometimes said) she looked upon it as both foolish and uncivil, to seek an easement of those pains, which our Lord had sent her for her delight: and therefore she never asked for any thing, but contented herself with what they gave her. She said likewise, it would prove a torment to her, to take content in any thing that was not God. But what is most remarkable is, that enquiring of those of the house, I found not one, that had observed in her any thing but what seemed to argue a soul of eminent perfection.

"Now the time being come, wherein our Lord would take her out of this miserable life, her pains increased, together with so many other distempers, that (in order to praise our Lord, in seeing the patience with which she endured them) the sisters went often to visit her, and in particular the chaplain, who was confessor to that monastery, and a great servant of God, had an earnest desire to be present at her death; for he being wont to hear her confessions, accounted her a saint. Our Lord was pleased to satisfy this his desire, for seeing she so perfectly enjoyed her senses, though she had already

received

received extreme unction, yet they called him, that if there were occasion that night, he might reconcile her, and fit her to die well. A little before nine o'clock, all the nuns being by, about a quarter of an hour before she died, all her pains left her, and she lifted up her eyes with a very great serenity, and a joyfulness settled in her countenance that seemed a kind of splendor; and she remained as one that looked upon an object that much delighted her, for she thereupon modestly smiled twice. All that were present, and the priest himself, felt such a suavity and spiritual joy, as they know not otherwise to express, than that they thought themselves in heaven. And with this cheerfulness which I am speaking of, keeping her eyes fixed towards heaven, she expired; her countenance remaining like that of an angel, and as we may believe, our Lord God conducting her soul to eternal rest, in recompence of that desire she had to suffer much for his sake.

"The chaplain affirms, that at the time of the interring her body, he smelled a very strong and a very delicious odour. The sacristan also avers, that the wax-tapers, lighted for her funeral, were found not to have wasted at all. All which may well be believed from the mercy of God. When I discoursed of these things with a confessor of hers of the Society of Jesus, who for many years had heard her confessions, he said it was no strange thing to him, for he knew that our Lord had great communication with her. His majesty vouchsafe to grant (my daughters,) that we may know how to make our advantage of so good company as this of hers, and of divers others, whom our Lord gives us in these monasteries. May he be praised by all, who makes his greatness shine forth so eminently in a few weak women."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXIX.

The foundation of the first convent of the discalceate Carmelite Friars.

"BEFORE I went to this foundation of Valladolid, says the Saint, (Foundations, chap. xvii.) I had already agreed with F. Antony of Jesus, who was then prior at Medina, and with Fr. John of the Cross, that they should be the first that were admitted, if any convent were erected of Discalceates of the first rule. But being unprovided as yet of a house, I continually recommended this matter to God. For I was already satisfied concerning these two fathers; because, as to F. Antony, our Lord had sufficiently exercised him with afflictions, which he underwent with much perfection; and it was now a year since I first treated with him about it: and as for F. John of the Cross, there was no need of any further proof, for though he lived amongst the calceate fathers of the rule relaxed, yet he had ever led a life of great perfection.

"It pleased our Lord, after having given me the principal, namely, friars to begin the work, to provide the rest also. A gentleman of Avila, called Don Raphael, with whom I had never had any acquaintance, came, I know not how, to understand that I desired to found a convent of discalceate friars. Whereupon he came and offered me for that purpose, a house he had in a little village named Durvelo. This dwelling served for a bailiff he had, who kept the account of his corn rents, that were gathered in thereabouts. I, though I was sensible what sort of a place this must needs be, praised our Lord, and thanked the gentleman for his proffer,

proffer, signifying to him that I accepted it. He told me it was in the way to Medina del Campo, through which I was to pass, to go to the foundation of Valladolid, and that I might see it: I answered him, I would, as in effect I did. I went from Avila in the month of June, with one companion, and F. Julian d'Avila, our chaplain. We departed before day-break, and knowing not the way, we missed it; and Durvelo being an obscure village, there was none that could give us sufficient direction. In this manner we travelled all that day with much trouble, because of the extreme heat of the sun; and when we thought we were nigh the place, we had as far again to go. I shall never forget the weariness and wandering up and down of that journey. We came thither a little before night, but when we entered into the house, we found it in such a condition, that we durst not lodge in it that night, by reason of the extreme nastiness there, and the number of reapers employed in the harvest. It had a tolerable portal (or hall,) two chambers arched over head, one within the other, and above them a garret and a little kitchen, and this was the whole building we were to make a convent of. I considered that of the hall might be made a church, of the garret a choir, which suited well enough; of the chambers a dormitory, and that the kitchen might also serve for a refectory. My companion, though much better than I, and a great lover of penance, could not endure I should think of making a convent here, and therefore said to me: "*certainly, mother, there is no spirit, though ever so good, that is able to endure it: speak no more of it, I beseech you.* F. Julian, though of the same opinion with my companion, when I told him my design, did not contradict me. So we went to pass that night in the church, but by reason of our weariness, had not the courage to watch it out.

"Being

" Being come to Medina, immediately I spoke with F. Antony, and told him what had passed; and that if he had a mind to stay there some time, he might be sure God would soon provide for him. Methinks, I then beheld as truly present, what our Lord hath since done; and accounted as certain all that I now see, yea, and a great deal more than I have seen; though yet at the time I am writing this, there are already, by the bounty of our Lord, no fewer than ten convents erected of the discalceates.——God had given him greater courage than me; for he told me, he was willing to dwell, not only there, but even in a hog-stie. And F. John of the cross was of the same mind. We wanted now the consent of the two provincials; for upon this condition, F. General granted the licence: and I had great confidence in our Lord for the obtaining of it. Whereupon I spoke to F. Antony to bethink himself of doing what he could, to gather together and lay up something for the new convent; and forthwith I departed with F. John of the cross to the foundation of Valladolid. Whilst we tarried there, I had an opportunity of acquainting him with all the particulars of our manner of proceeding and living, &c. though he was so very good, that I might certainly have learned much more from him than he from me; but it was not my design to teach him, but only to let him see the form and method of the sister's proceedings.

" It pleased God that our present provincial, Alonso Gonzales, should at this time be here (at Valladolid) an old man, very good and harmless, to whom I applied for a licence, urging so many reasons to him, particularly as to the account he should give to God, if he hindered so good a work; that his divine Majesty disposing him, (whose will it was it should be done) he was much mollified. And the Lady Maria de Mendoza (wife to the governor and her brother, the bishop of Avila, coming hither also, they soon obtained his consent, as they did

likewise

likewise the consent of Angelo de Salazar, the former provincial, from whom I feared all the difficulty; but there fell out just then an accident, in which he stood in need of the favour of the lady above-named; and this I believe furthered it much, though if this reason had not served, our Lord, no doubt, would have inspired it, and put it into his mind to do it, as he did into the F. Generals, who also of himself was far enough from consenting or even thinking on any such thing. O my Lord, how many things have I seen effected in these affairs, that seemed impossible, and how easily was it for thy Majesty to bring them about! And what a confusion is it to me (having seen all that I have seen) that I should be no better than I am! Even now, whilst I write this, I am in a wonder, and desire our Lord would manifest to all the world, that in these foundations, we poor creatures have, as, ii were, done nothing at all; but our Lord hath ordered and disposed all by the means of so very low beginnihings, as that his Majesty alone could have been able to exalt it to what it now is. Be he for ever blessed. *Amen.*

'As soon as I had got the consent of these two, I 'thought nothing more was wanting. So we agreed, 'that F. John of the Cross, should go to the house, and 'prepare it in such sort, that they might enter upon it, 'and begin there as well as they could. F. Anthony 'had already got together some small things that were 'necessary; and we assisted likewise in what we could, 'though it were but little. He came to Valladolid to 'speak with me full of joy, and told me what provision 'he had made, which was mean enough—There was but 'little stay in fitting up the house; for money would 'have been wanting, if they would have done much. 'After this, F. Antony, with very great willingness, 'quitted his priorship and took the vow of observing the

first

'first rule. I proposed to him to try it first, but he would 'not; and so he went to this little cottage with the 'greatest content in the world. F. John was there al-'ready. He told me, that when he came within sight of 'the place, he felt an exceeding great inward joy; and 'seemed to himself, in his very entering into that soli-'tude, to have quite done with the world, and to have 'utterly abandoned it: and neither the one nor the other 'thought the house amiss; but they rather imagined 'themselves to live in great delicacy.

'On the first (or second) Sunday of Advent, *anno* '1568, the mass was said in this little *portal* of Beth-'lehem: for it seemed to me no better. And in the 'following Lent, as I went to the foundation of Toledo, 'I passed by it, and came thither one morning, as F. 'Antony, of Jesus, was sweeping the door of the little 'church, with that cheerful countenance which he always 'hath. *How is this,* said I, *Father, what is now become 'of your honour?* He answered me (shewing the great 'content he enjoyed), *I abhor the time that ever I made 'any account of it.* When I came into the church, I 'was astonished to behold the spirit our Lord had put 'there: and two merchants, who came with me from 'Medina, did nothing but weep: there were so many 'crosses, and so many death's-heads. I shall never 'forget one little cross of wood, that was by the holy 'water, to which was fastened a paper crucifix, that 'inspired more devotion, than if it had been of costlier 'matter, and curiously wrought. The loft between the 'arch and the roof of the house, all along in the middle 'and highest part of it, was the quire, where they said 'the hours of the divine office; but to enter into it, one 'must stoop much. On the two sides of the garret to-'wards the church, they had made two little hermitages,

'in

'in which they could not stand upright, stopped in the 'inside with hay, because the place was very cold; to-'towards the altar were two little windows made, and 'two stones for their pillows: and here, also, there 'were crosses, and death's heads. I understood, that 'after they had ended their matins, they returned not 'to lie down, but continued till the hour of prime, in 'these hermitages, in mental prayer; which they had 'in an high degree: and it fell out many times, that 'they went to prime, with their habits covered with 'snow, and perceived it not. They recited their cano-'nical hours, with another Father of the rule relaxed, '(who went to live with them, but being very sickly, 'did not change his habit,) and with another young reli-'gious man, not yet in holy orders. They went about 'preaching, in divers places in the neighbourhood, 'where the people, having no convent near, were very 'ignorant—and the reputation they in a short time 'gained by their labours, was very great—I understood 'that they went to preach six or eight miles off bare-'foot, (for at this time they wore no sandals which they 'were afterwards enjoined to wear) in the greatest 'snows and cold: and when they had done preaching, 'and hearing confessions, they came back to their meal 'at home, very late, but with such content, that all their 'sufferings seemed little to them.

"When I saw (continues the Saint, chap. xviii.) that cottage, which a little before could not be dwelt in, endued with such a spirit, that whithersoever I turned me, I was edified; and withal understood their manner of living, their mortification, and prayer, with the good example they gave—and the great good they did amongst the people: I could not satisfy myself in rendering our Lord thanks, with an excessive inward joy: for methought

I was

I saw already, a foundation laid, for the great increase of our order, and service of our Lord. But then after I had treated with those fathers about some things, I (as a weak and miserable creature) earnestly requested them, not to proceed in this business of penance with so much rigour; for their austerities were very great. And since it had cost me so much pains—to procure some to begin the work, and it had already taken so good a rise, I wa afraid the devil would seek out a way to bring them t their deaths, before that which I expected and hoped for, should be effected: for being imperfect, and of so little faith, I considered not that it was a work of God, and that his Divine Majesty was to carry it on. But they, as having that perfection and spirit, which I wanted, made little account of my words for omitting their exercises. So I departed with very great consolation, although I rendered not to God that praise and thanks, which so high a favour deserves . . . for I sufficiently understood, that this was by much a greater favour, than that he had done me in founding the monasteries of nuns."

And here the holy mother relates, how, not long after, a neighbouring gentleman prevailed on these servants of God, to exchange their convent of Durvelo, for a church he had newly erected; and a house agreeable to their poverty, which he built for them, at a place called Manzera; and how our Lord gave them water there, in their want: there being before, no well-water in the place, nor any likelihood of procuring any. "I will not pass in silence," says she, "how our Lord gave them water, it being held a thing miraculous. Father Anthony, who was Prior, being one day, after supper in the cloister, with his Religious; and they discoursing of the need they had of water, the Prior rose up, and taking a staff in his hand, which he, being ancient, was accustomed to use, made with it a cross, as I think, or at least marked out with

with it a certain place, and said, Now dig here. They did, and before they had digged very deep, there presently came forth such plenty of water, that there being occasion since sometimes to cleanse the well; it is a difficult thing to drain and empty it: and the water is very good to drink: so that they use it in all offices, and, as I said, it never fails."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXX.

The foundation of the monasteries of Toledo, Pastrana, and Salamanca.

THE next foundation the holy mother made was that of Toledo, in 1569. The founder was Martin Ramirez, an eminent merchant, to whom the saint gives this character: that he was a servant of God, who would never marry, but lived as a good Catholic should do, a very upright and virtuous life, and improved his estate by lawful traffick, with a purpose to bestow it in some work most acceptable to God. Whereupon falling sick, he was advised by a father of the society to give it, for the erecting of a monastery of discalced Carmelite nuns. This father (Paul Hernandes) upon the death of Mr. Ramirez, sent to the holy mother, then employed in the foundation of Valladolid, exhorting her to accept of this donation, and presently to put her hand to this business. Upon which she departed from Valladolid, and arrived at Toledo, on the eve of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, and was there lodged and entertained with her companions, by her good friend, the lady Louisa de la Cerda. In this foundation, as in most of the rest, she met with many crosses and oppositions, all which she overcame with much patience. And as to the poverty and hardships, she and her companions for some time endured, they proved so delicious to her, that she found herself sensibly afflicted when their wants were afterward abundantly supplied: just as one would be, who being possessed of a great treasure (for such she esteemed poverty and want) should have it taken away from her.

Here

Here also upon some proposals made to her, of admitting none to be buried in her church, but such as were noble, our Lord was pleased to give her light in prayer; and to make her understand, as she says, how little nobility and honour is regarded before God's tribunal: and he even gave her a sharp reprehension, for listening to such matters, as no way befitting persons, who had despised the world, as we professed to do."

Here also the Saint treats of the extraordinary virtues and favours, bestowed upon her nuns in this monastery: "It fell out, says she, whilst I was yet there, that a sister sickened to death; who, after receiving the most holy sacrament, and the extreme unction, was so joyful, that she seemed already to be in heaven.—A little before she expired, I, having been first before the blessed sacrament, to beseech our Lord to grant her a good end, went into her chamber, to stay with her; at my entering in, I saw our Lord about the middle of her bed's head, with his arms somewhat open, as he who stood there to protect her. And he bad me, *be confident, that he would thus defend all the nuns that should die in these monasteries: and that they should not fear any temptation at the hour of their death.* Upon which I was exceedingly comforted, and recollected in prayer. A little after I went to speak to her, and she said to me, O mother, what great things are prepared for me to see! And presently she expired, looking as amiable as an angel. I observed in several that died afterward, that their departure was with a certain repose and peace, as if they had been in an extasy, or in the prayer of quiet, without shewing any sign of temptation. So that I hope in his divine goodness, he will still vouchsafe us this grace and favour, for the merits of his blessed Son, and of his glorious mother, whose habit we wear—our Lord grant, my sisters, that we may lead the lives of true daughters of the blessed

Virgin, and keep up to our professien, that so our Lord may do us the favour he hath promised us. Amen." So far the Saint, [Foundations, chap. xx.] who in the following chapter proceeds to relate the history of the foundation of the two monasteries in Pastrama, one for friars, the other for nuns, begun in the same year, 1569.

" Having taken possession, says she, of the monastery erected at Toledo, after fifteen days pains, in fitting of the little church, putting up grates, and doing other things very troublesome—being quite tired out in those days with continually dealing with workmen; when all was now finished, on Whitsun eve, as we were at dinner in the refectory, so great a delight seized me, to see that now I had no more to do, and that I should be able, during this festival, to entertain myself for some time with our Lord, that I could scarce eat, I found myself so overjoyed. This consolation lasted not long; for whilst I was thus effected, they came to tell me that a servant of the princess d'Evoli, wife of prince Ruy Gomez de Silva, was at the door, wanting to speak to me. I went to the wheel, to know his business; which was that the princess had sent for me, for erecting a monastery in Pastrama; concerning which some speech had passed long since between her and me; yet I never imagined it was to be so soon. This troubled me, because the monastery of Toledo being so lately founded, and with so much opposition, it was very dangerous to leave it; wherefore for the present I resolved not to go. He told me this would be taken very ill, because his lady was there already, and went thither for no other purpose .... I desired him to take his dinner; and that I in the mean time would write to the princess.—I cast myself therefore before the blessed sacrament, beseeching our Lord to grant me the favour, to write in such manner to the princess as not to offend her—on which account our Lord said

said to me, *That I should not neglect to go, for I went for more than that foundation; and that I should carry with me the rule, and the constitutions.* Wheu I understood this, though I had strong reasons for going thither; I durst do no other than what in the like cases I use to do, which is to steer by the direction of my confessor, who well weighing the matter, was of opinion, that I should go. So I determined to be gone the second day of the feast.

" As we passed through Madrid, my companions and I went to lodge in a monastery of discalced nuns of the order of St. Francis, where there was a lady their foundress called Donna Leonora de Mascaregnas (who had been governess to the king) a great servant of God.—This lady told me she was glad I came thither so seasonably; for here was a hermit, that much desired my acquaintance; and it seemed to her, that the life which he and his companions led, was very conformable to our rule. I thought if I could get him to take our habit of discalceate, it would be a great matter; and so I prayed her to let us talk together. He lived in a lodging which this lady had given him, with another companion, a young man called brother John de la Miseria, a great servant of God, but very simple in matters of the world —But before I proceed further, I have a mind to relate what I know of this hermit, who was called Marianus of St. Bennet. He was by nation an Italian, a doctor of the law, and a man of great wit, and had been entertained in the queen of Poland's court, in quality of steward of her household; retaining in the mean time a commandery in the order of the knights of Malta: till God was pleased to call him to a retired life, with an inspiration to quit all, the better to attend to his own salvation. He had before sustained some troubles; and amongst others had been accused of a certain murder; upon which occasion he had been kept

two years in prison; where he sought not any advocate to defend his cause, but committed himself wholly into the hands of God, who knew his innocence. And whereas witnesses appeared against him, who affirmed they were called by him to kill that man; it fell out (almost like the case of the elders who accused Susanna) that being each examined a part, they were found in a different story; and at last they confessed the whole was a slander, and a lie. And he assured me, it cost him afterwards a good sum to get them freed from punishment: and that the party also, who had raised all that stir against him, fell into his hands, standing in need that he should give a certain testimony in his favour; and that he did his utmost endeavour herein, not to prejudice him. For these and other virtues (being also a person pure and chaste) God was pleased to reward him with light to know the world, and what it was; that he might endeavour to sequester himself from it. Whereupon he began to think what order he should enter into—but examining first one, then another, he found, as he told me, in them all, inconveniences for one of his condition. He understood that near Seville, in a desert called Tardon, there lived certain hermits, having for their superior a holy man, named Fr. Matthew, each had his cell apart, without saying the divine office; only they met in an oratory to hear mass; they had no revenue; neither did they ask, or receive alms; but they maintained themselves with their labour and handy work; and every one eat by himself in great poverty. Which seemed to me, when I heard of it, a copy of the life of our holy fathers. In this course of life he continued eighty years; but the council of Trent, having lately ordained that hermits should be reduced to some of the approved religious orders, he intended to go to Rome, to obtain leave of the See Apostolic, for himself and his companions to continue as formerly.

merly. And in this mind he was, when I spoke with him. I understanding this his manner of life, shewed him our primitive rule, and told him that, without so much trouble, he might observe all that, seeing it was the same; especially that of living with the labour of our hands, to which he was much inclined; telling me that covetousness was the bane of the world; and that this caused in him a mean opinion of some religious also. As I was of the same opinion with him in this, so we soon agreed in all the rest. Wherefore upon my representing to him, how much he might serve God in this our habit, he told me he would think on it that night. I thought I saw him already, as it were resolved; and conceived that this was what I had been told in prayer; namely that I was going for something more than a monastery of nuns; and I took extreme contentment therein, believing that our Lord would be greatly served by this man's entering into our order. His Divine Majesty so moved him that night, that presently the next day he sent for me, and told me he was fully resolved to do what I had desired of him; not a little wondering to see himself so suddenly changed by a woman, as he still tells me sometimes, as if I had been the only cause, and not rather our Lord, who (when he pleases) can change mens hearts.

He told me also, how prince Ruy Gomez had given him a fair hermitage, and a place for establishing a community of hermits in his lordship of Pastrana, which was the same place whither I was going: and that he would have it to be of our order, and would himself take the habit of it. I greatly thanked our Lord for it; because, though our general had given me leave for two convents there was as yet but one founded. And from thence I sent a message to the two fathers, the former and present provincial, begging their licence for it, and employing for this purpose the interest of the bishop of Avila. They,

conceiving,

conceiving, that by erecting a foundation in a place so remote, no prejudice could come to them, gave their consent: and the bishop also wrote to me that the licence was granted, whereupon I departed exceedingly satisfied. I found at Pastrana the princess and the prince Ruy Gomez, who very courteously entertained me, and assigned us a lodging apart, where we staid longer than I imagined; because the house which the princess had allotted us was very little, and she had caused a great part of it to be pulled down to the ground, to be new built and fitted for our conveniency.

"We lived here three months, wherein we endured many and great troubles, the princess requiring of me some conditions which were not good for our order; so that I resolved rather to return without erecting any monastery, than consent to those demands. But the prince Ruy Gomez, being very reasonable and discreet, with his mildness somewhat tempered his wife, and I also condescended to some things, out of the desire I had for the erecting the convent of friars; as knowing how much this imported, as afterward appeared.

"About this time came to Pastrana F. Marianus and his companion, with the hermits above-mentioned, and a licence being obtained, they all agreed that the hermitage should be of Discalced Friars. So I sent for F. Antony of Jesus, from Nanzera, that he might begin the founding of this convent; and I accommodated and sowed their habits and mantles, working as hard as I could, that there might be no delay. At the same time I sent for more nuns also to the monastery of Medina, for I had brought but two with me. There lived then at Medina a calceate Carmelite, called F. Baltazar of Jesus, who though somewhat

what ancient, was an excellent preacher. He understanding that the convent was erected in Pastrana, came in the company of the nuns, with a purpose of changing his habit, and becoming a discalceate, as he did soon after his arrival; for which I exceedingly praised God. He gave the habit to F. Marianus and his companion for lay brothers; for I could not persuade F. Marianus to be a priest, for he desired to be admitted only as an inferior, and to serve all. But afterward by command of our F. General he was ordained priest.

" Now these two convents being founded, and F. Antony of Jesus being come, many good novices were here admitted, who began in such good earnest to serve our Lord, as (if he pleases) some one else may relate, who knows better than I how to do it; for truly in this case I conceive myself insufficient." Of this number was P. Jerome Gratian, a great favourite of the saint's, and one of her chiefest assistants, of whose virtues she has given elsewhere high eulogiums. From this convent of Pastrana divers others quickly sprung. But as for the nunnery which was established there at the same time, the good sisters afterwards met with so much trouble, from the splenetic temper of the princess, that the holy mother found it necessary to remove them from Pastrana to Segovia.

From Pastrana the Saint returned to Toledo, where she staid some months; and from thence she went to found a monastery in Salamanca. She began, with licence of the ordinary, on All Saints day, 1569; the devil being no ways able to obstruct this foundation in its beginning, as she takes notice of. " But afterward, says she, there were so many troubles and oppositions which befel it, that this business is not yet quite

quite finished, though some years be already run out since the first erecting of it, to this time in which I am writing this: and therefore I believe God is much served in this monastery, because the devil cannot endure it."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXXI.

The foundation of the monastery of Alva. The history of the Foundress, and of the vision, which gave occasion to this foundation.

"IT was not full two months (says the holy mother, in the 24th chapter of her Foundations,) after hiring the house at Salamanca, where the nuns had as yet no house of their own, when I was importuned in behalf of the steward of the duke of Alva, and his wife, to erect a monastery in Alva de Tormez. I had no great inclination to it, because this being a small town, the monastery would have need of rent; and my desire was, that none of our monasteries should have any. It happened that F. Dominick Bannez, who was my confessor, was then at Salamanca, who chid me, saying, that the council of Trent having given leave to admit of revenue, it would not be well to omit on this score the founding of a monastery—and that this would not hinder the nuns from possessing poverty and high perfection.

"And here, before I proceed any farther, I will declare who it was that founded this house, and in what manner our Lord inspired her to found it. The foundress of the monastery of the Annunciation of our blessed Lady, at Alva de Tormez, was Teresa de Layz, a gentlewoman born of parents, who were both of them noble, and of ancient extraction; but their wealth not bearing proportion to the greatness of their family, they dwelt in a little town called Tordiglias, six miles distant from Alva above mentioned. Now as they had four daughters already, when Teresa was born, they were exceedingly troubled, to find that this child proved also a daughter;

a daughter; a thing much to be lamented that men who know not what is best for them, should thus torment themselves to no purpose, for that which ought rather to be a subject of joy; and should not be willing to leave all to God, who understands and creates all, and who disposes all for the best. In fine, (being disappointed in their wishes) they had so little care for this infant, that when she was but three days old, she was left all alone from morning till evening, without being regarded by any body. Though in this indeed they had done well, that they had gotten a priest to baptize her, presently after she was born. When evening came, a certain woman understanding what had passed, ran to look if she were living or dead, and with her some others, who came to visit the mother, and who afterward witnessed what I shall now relate. The woman took up the child into her arms, and bemoaning it, said to her, *what, my pretty babe, art thou not then a Christian?* meaning by that expression to complain of the cruelty they had shewn to it, in neglecting it after that manner. The child lifted up its head, and answered, *yes, that I am:* and spoke no more till the time that children usually begin to speak. All that heard it were astonished, and from that time the mother began to have a particular love for it, and to take great care of it, often saying she wished to live, till she saw how God would dispose of that child, whom she educated very well, and instructed in all kinds of virtue.

"The time for marrying her being come, she was unwilling to enter upon that state: but understanding that Francis Velasquez was a suitor to her, who likewise as her consort, is co-founder of this monastery, she presently resolved, if her parents should propose it to her, to accept of him for her husband, though she had never

seen

seen him before in her life. But our Lord saw it fit it should be so, for the effecting this good work, which both of them have done for the serving of his divine Majesty. For besides his being rich and virtuous, he so loves his wife, that he seeks to please her in every thing, and very justly, for God hath given him in her, all that can or should be desired in a wife, since that together with the care and forecast she takes of her family, she is also very chaste and virtuous. Insomuch that her husband having brought her to Alva, where he was born, and the duke's officers having assigned a lodging in her house to a young gentleman, she took great offence thereat, and kept herself retired, avoiding all conversation and society with any such persons. And whereas the devil (in regard she was young and very beautiful) began to suggest lewd purposes to her young guest, which if she had not been so very circumspect and chaste as indeed she was, might have produced some scandal and disorder; she perceiving it, without telling her husband any thing of it, earnestly requested him to remove her from Salamanca, where they lived very contented, he being possessed of a beneficial and honourable employment there. Only they were grieved that our Lord gave them no son, and she on her part used great devotions and many prayers, to the end that he would bestow one upon them, who when she died, might praise his divine Majesty in her name. For she told me, she had never any other end in desiring issue; and she is to be credited, because she is a woman of great veracity, and so good a Christian, that she many times incites me to praise God in beholding his works in her; and a soul that is so desirous of continually pleasing him, and who never ceaseth to spend her time in good things.

"She

"She passed many years with this desire, often recommending herself to the glorious Apostle St. Andrew, who, as she had been told, was a good advocate for obtaining her request. After many prayers made, as she lay one night in her bed, she heard a voice that said to her: *do not desire children, for you will condemn yourself for it.* She was much amazed and affrighted at these words, but did not thereupon leave wishing for them; conceiving that as her end was so very good, there could be no reason why she should condemn herself for it. And so she continued still requesting of our Lord this blessing, by the intercession of St. Andrew. Being one time with this longing desire (she knows not whether she was awake or asleep) she thought she was in a house, where in a court, under a gallery, was a well, and on the side of it a meadow full of white flowers, so exquisitely beautiful, as she never saw the like, nor was able to express. Near the well appeared St. Andrew, in a very beautiful and venerable form; who said to her, *these are other kind of children than those you desire.* The consolation she took in this vision was so great, that she was unwilling it should ever have ended, yet it lasted but a little while. She understood plainly that it was St. Andrew, without any one telling her, and that it was the will of God that a monastery should be built in that place; by which it is evident that the vision was not merely imaginary, but also intellectual, and that there was no mistake or illusion of the devil in the case, is further confirmed by the good effect it produced; for from that instant she never more desired children, but had it deeply imprinted in her heart, that the erecting of a monastery was the thing that God required; and so she began to consider what course she should take, to put this in execution. This happened above six years before the monastery was founded.

"Being

"Being therefore much struck with this vision, she proposed to her husband, that since it did not please God to give them children, they should with their wealth build a monastery for nuns. He being so very good, and loving her so dearly, liked it well; and they began to deliberate where it should be erected. Whilst this was in agitation, the Dutchess of Alva prevailed with Mr. Velasquez to return to Alva and dwell there, for the managing of an office and employment which she gave him in her court. His wife was much troubled at it, because she abhorred the place, but was somewhat pacified upon being assured that she should have no more lodgers put upon her. When she came to Alva, and saw the house her husband had gotten for her, she did not like it, for it had but little store of lodging, though a fair and large dwelling; so that she was uneasy all that night. The next morning, when she came into the court, she saw at the side of it a well, and presently she called to mind that it was just the same, with every thing else, neither more nor less, which she had seen when St. Andrew appeared to her, only that she saw not the Saint there, nor the meadow, nor the flowers, though she both had, and still hath them imprinted in her imagination. As soon as she saw it she was struck, and purposed to build a monastery in that place—whereupon they began to purchase some houses adjoining, till they had room enough to do what they had a mind.

"Her solicitude now was, what Order the monastery should be: for she desired the nuns should be few, and very strict: when communicating her intention to two religious men of different orders, very virtuous and learned, they both of them told her it would be better to undertake some other pious work, for that nuns for the

most

most part lived discontented; with divers other extravagant things which they alledged, because the devil disliking the business, suggested these groundless apprehensions to hinder and disturb it. Upon hearing the reasons which these religious men produced, she was afraid to proceed, and in conclusion changed her mind; telling her husband, that seeing such persons as these said it was not good, and their intention was to do something acceptable to God, they might safely desist from their first design. So they agreed to marry a niece of her husband to her nephew (her sister's son) one whom she dearly loved, and to bestow on these the greatest part of their estate, and with what remained to provide the best they could for their own souls; this her nephew being very virtuous and very young. In this resolution they both continued very firm, and fully satisfied. But our Lord having appointed otherwise, this their agreement availed little; for scarce a fortnight passed after this accord, when such a violent fever seized the young man, that in very few days our Lord took him to himself. She was extremely sad, and terrified at his death, imputing it to the determination she had taken of omitting the work, which God would have done for the enriching this nephew, and that therefore God had punished her by taking from her him whom she so dearly loved. From that day forward both she and her husband resolved not to desist, on any accovnt, from pursuing this foundation; though how to put it in execution they knew not. For they to whom she related and described how she would have the monastery to be, laughed at her, as imagining she could never bring those things about which she desired. In which kind he that discouraged her, and afflicted her the most, was her confessor, an eminent man of the Order of St. Francis.

"About

"About that time it fell out, that this same father went to some place where he had notice of these monasteries of our Lady of Mount Carmel, which were then founding; and after informing himself well concerning them, at his return he told her, he had now discovered, how she might erect a monastery according to that plan which she was so desirous of; and he recounted to her what had passed, and exhorted her to treat of the business with me as she did. There happened a great deal of trouble before all matters were agreed upon; but at length they yielded to reason, assigning a competent revenue for the number of nuns; and, which I esteemed highly, they quitted their own house to bestow it on us, going themselves into another, which was very inconvenient.

"The blessed Sacrament was set up, and the foundation finished, on the day of the Conversion of St. Paul, (1577) to the honour and glory of God; where, in my opinion, his divine Majesty is greatly served. May he vouchsafe to advance it more and more. I had begun to declare some particulars of certain sisters of these monasteries, for the encouragement of those who shall come hereafter. But afterward I thought there would not be wanting others who would do it better and more particularly, and without that servile fear which I have, as imagining that they will judge me a party: and for this reason I have omitted divers things, that one could not but judge to have been miraculous; not to speak of other supernatural things, which it is evident our Lord hath done upon the prayers of these sisters."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXXII.

The foundation of the monasteries at Segovia and at Veas: the wonders of God in the conversion and miraculous recovery of the foundress of the latter. (Foundations, chap. 25 and 26.)

"AFTER founding the monasteries of Salamanca and Alva, and before that of Salamanca had any house of their own, I was commanded by F. Peter Fernandez (at that time Commissary Apostolic for the Order of the Carmelites) to go for three years to be prioress in the monastery of the Incarnation at Avila: who afterward perceiving the necessity of the monastery of Salamanca, enjoined me to return thither, that a house might be purchased for the nuns, and they might remove into it. Being there one day in prayer, our Lord bade me go and found a monastery at Segovia. It seemed to me not feasible, because I could not go from hence without a command of the commissary, and I knew he had no mind I should found any more monasteries. Besides, the three years I was to spend in governing the monastery of the Incarnation not being yet expired, he had reason for not granting me such a licence. Whilst I was solicitous what I should do, our Lord bade me ask his licence, for that he would give it me. Accordingly I wrote to him, that since he knew I was under a command from our F. General, that whenever any opportunity presented itself for founding in any place, I should not let it slip; and that now at Segovia a fit occasion offered itself, the city and the bishop having consented to the erecting of one of these monasteries, if his Reve-

rence

rence pleased to command it, I would found it; which I signified to him for discharging my conscience, and should rest very well contented and satisfied with whatever he should enjoin; but that I conceived it would be a service to Almighty God. It plainly appeared it was our Lord's pleasure it should be done, because he immediately answered me, that I should go about it, and sent me a licence; at which I much wondered, considering what I had formerly known by him, in the like case.

"There lived at Segovia a widow lady called Anna Ximena, a great servant of God, whose vocation had always been to become a nun: she with a daughter of hers, one of a very good life, was admitted in the erecting of this monastery; and for the trouble she had suffered, both wife and widow, our Lord gave her a double portion of content, in seeing herself now received into religion. This good lady hired a house for us, and furnished us with all that she knew we had need of, both for the church and ourselves. But that there might be no foundation without some affliction, besides that I went thither with a strong fever upon me, and no stomach, and with several inward maladies of drinesses, and strange darkness in my soul, joined with divers sorts of corporal distempers, the violence of which had held me three months before, and kept me continually sick for the whole six months that I staid there; after we had privately taken possession, and set up the Blessed Sacrament on St. Joseph's day, we met with great opposition from the vicar (the bishop having only given licence by word of mouth, and not being then in town) and again some months after, when we had purchased a house, we found we had purchased several lawsuits with it, which proved very vexatious. But the greatest affliction these intrigues put me to, was that I now wanted

not above seven or eight days of finishing the years of my office of prioress in the monastery of the Incarnation, and this time being expired, was necessarily to be there. But our Lord was pleased, at this conjuncture, that all things were (suddenly) composed so well, that no difference remained; so that two or three days after I went back to the Incarnation. His most holy name for ever be blessed, who hath continually done me so great favours; and let all his creatures praise him for ever more. *Amen.*

"When I was at Salamanca, (before the founding of the monastery of Segovia) a messenger came to me from Veas with letters from a gentlewoman of that place, and from the parish priest of the town, and some others, requesting me to come and found a monastery there, for they had a house for it already, and nothing wanted but my coming there. Now considering the great distance of the place, and the tedious journey there would be to make from Salamanca to Veas, it seemed an improper business; especially as it could not be done without the Apostolic Commisary's command, who was an enemy, or at least no friend, to the founding of monasteries: so I purposed to answer that I could not come, without saying any thing else. But then reflecting, that F. Commissary being actually at Salamanca, it would not be well to return this answer without his advice, by reason of the injunction laid on me by our most reverend F. General, not to leave founding; I sent the letters to him, and he having perused them, sent to tell me, that he thought it would not be well to discourage these persons, with whose devotion he was much edified; but that I should answer them, that as soon as they could get leave from the council of the Orders because the place belonged to a commandery of the knights of St. James,)

I should

I should be ready to found it. He added, that I might be confident they would not be able to get it, for that he knew of several persons, who could not in divers years, obtain the like faculties; however he recommended to me not to return them an ill answer. I sometimes think on this, and how when our Lord wills a thing, though we intend it not, he brings it about, so that without our minding and perceiving it, we prove the instruments thereof, as here F. Fernandez the Commissary was; for the leave being got (contrary to his expectation) he could not now deny his licence; and thus the business was effected.

"This monastery of the glorious St. Joseph, in the town of Veas, was founded on St. Matthias's day, in the year 1573. The beginning of it was in the manner following, to the honour and glory of God. There lived in this town a gentleman of noble extraction, and abounding in temporal wealth, called Sancio Rodriguez de Sandoval, having to wife a lady named Donna Catharina Godinez. Among other children which our Lord gave them, were two daughters, who were afterwards the foundresses of this monastery. The elder was called (from her mother) Donna Catharina Godinez, the younger, Donna Maria de Sandoval. The elder was fourteen years old, when our Lord called her to his service, till which time she was very far from thinking of abandoning the world; nay, she set so great a value on herself, that when her father proffered her any match, she thought every one too mean and low for her, and she had no inclination to marry at all, as judging it a base thing and unworthy of her, to be subject to any one, nor did she discern whence this her pride arose. She being in these dispositions, one day, in a chamber within her father's, (who was not yet risen out of bed) casually cast

her eyes upon a crucifix that was there, and read the title of the cross; and in reading of it, our Lord totally changed her upon the spot. She had been thinking but a little before on a match proposed to her, which, though too good for her, she rejected with disdain; and she had been just then saying to herself, *what a small matter contents my father! Whereas I intend the honour of my family shall begin in me.* O how well does our Lord know what means to cure us by! His mercy be eternally blessed. Having read the title of the cross, she seemed (in the same instant) to have received a great light in her soul to understand the truth, as if the sun should suddenly shine into a dark room; and with this light she fixed her eyes on our Lord hanging on the cross, and there shedding his blood, and considered how ill treated he was, and his stupendous humility; and on the other side what a different course she took, going by the way of pride. On this she employed her thoughts for some space of time, our Lord holding her in a rapture or suspension, wherein his Majesty gave her a clear knowledge of her own misery and baseness, with a desire that all others should also know it. At the same time she was seized with such an ardent desire of suffering for God, that she wished she might undergo even what the martyrs had endured; and likewise with such a detestation of herself, and profound abasement of humility, that if it might have been without offending God, she could have been content to have been esteemed a debauched and infamous woman, that all the world might abhor her: and hereupon she began to contemn herself, and to be enflamed with a desire of doing penance, which she afterward in effect put in execution. She immediately made a vow of chastity, and of poverty also, and conceived such a desire to be subject to the will of another,

that

that merely for this she would have been glad to have been transported, and live a slave in the country of the Moors. All these virtues continued with her, so that it plainly appeared to have been a supernatural favour of our Lord, as hereafter shall be declared, to the end all may praise him.

"Whilst her thoughts were thus entertained, so great a noise was heard in the chamber, as if it had fallen quite down; and it seemed to come from that corner of the room where she herself was: she heard also there certain hideous roarings and yells that lasted for some time. So that her father, who was in the next room, and, as I said, was not risen out out of bed, was extremely terrified therewith; and presently throwing his night-gown about him, and taking his sword, went in thither to his daughter, and looking pale upon it, asked her what was the matter? She answered, she saw nothing; he looked also into another room behind this, and seeing nothing, he bade her go to her mother, and charged his wife not to let his daughter be alone, telling her what he had heard. By this it sufficiently appears, how much the devil is displeased to have a soul taken out of his hands, which he accounted as his own; especially as seeing our merciful God bestow so many favours together, he was sensible by the treasures which our Lord deposited in that soul, he should, by her means, lose also several others, which he reckoned his; for I take it for granted, that our Lord never confers such eminent favours as these on any one, without imparting some share in the benefit thereof to more than that one party to whom they are done. She told no one what passed at that time in her soul, but remained exceedingly desirous of entering into some religious order; and with much importunity requested it for a long time of her parents, who would never consent to it.

"At

"At the end of three years, when she saw, she could not, by her earnest entreaties, obtain what she desired; she put on, on one day (it being the festival of Joseph) a plain modest habit, acquainting no one but her mother with it—and being thus attired, she went to church, to the end that having been once seen in public, in this dress, by people abroad, she might not be hindered by her parents from wearing it afterward——though in the sequel she endured enough on this account. During those three years, she every day kept her hours of prayer, and mortified herself in all she could, as our Lord directed her. She went often into a yard belonging to the house; and there washed her face, and afterward exposed it to the sun, on purpose to disfigure herself, that no one might desire her in marriage; for they very much importuned her to marry. She was so averse from seeking or loving to command any one, that if at any time she had given any commands to the maids (as she was obliged to do, having the charge and government of the house) she watched till they were asleep, that she might kiss their feet, as being troubled they should serve her, since in her opinion they were much better than herself. Her parents employing her in the day, she spent almost all the night, instead of sleeping, in prayer——her penances, and disciplinings were frequent and excessive, because not communicating them to any one, she had none to hinder, or direct her in them. Among others, she wore one lent next to her skin a coat of mail of her father's. She retired into some secret place to her prayers, where the devil was often troublesome to her: many times she began her prayers two hours before midnight, and continued them, without reflecting on it, till it was broad day.

"In these exercises she spent about four years; after which our Lord, because she was to serve him in greater matters, sent her a complication of very grievous and painful

painful diseases; such as a continual fever, a dropsy, the passion of the heart, and a cancer, which afterwards they cut off; and under these maladies she continued about seventeen years; in all which time she was well but a few days. Her father died in the fifth year of her sickness, and her sister Donna Maria, when fourteen years of age, about a year after her, made the like change as she had done, quitting the pomps and vanities of the world, and addicting herself to devotion. Their mother farthered them in all good exercises, so far as to give them leave to trample the world under their feet, for being gentlewomen well descended, they employed themselves in the pious and humble occupation of teaching gratis, little children to work and to read, that they might the better instruct them in prayer, and in the Christian doctrine. This wrought much good; for many resorted to them, in whom are seen to this day the good habits, which they there learned in their childhood. However it lasted not long; for the devil being displeased at so good a work, persuaded the children's parents, that it was a disparagement to them——to let their children be so taught free cost. This together with the sickness that molested her, made it be left off.

"Five years after the father of these gentlewomen, their mother also departed this life; and since Donna Catharina's call was still to be a nun, her parents, who had opposed it, being now both of them dead, she began to consult, how she might speedily accomplish it. And because there being no monastery in Veas, she intended to go to some other place, their kindred rather advised them, as they had an estate sufficient to build a monastery, to procure one to be erected in their own country, in which they might become nuns; and that this would prove a greater service to God. But the place belonging to the order of the knights of St. James, there was need

of

of the licence of the council of orders; and so she bagan to endeavour to procure it, but it proved so difficult to obtain, that four years were spent, with great costs, and many troubles sustained; and yet till a petition was delivered to the king, she was never the nearer. The difficulty being so great, her kindred told her that it was in vain to hope for success—and that she should quite desist from thinking any more of it. And as she almost continually kept her bed, through extreme sickness, they assured her no monastesy would admit her for a nun. She answered that if within a month, our Lord gave her health, they might know by that sign, his Divine Majesty was pleased the monastery should be built, and that she herself would go to court for a licence. When she spoke this, she had kept her bed above half a year; and for about eight years before, she was hardly able to stir out of it without help; and in those years, she had a continual hectic fever, the tissick, the dropsy, and an inflammation of the liver, so violent that it scorched her exteriorly, and even burned her very shift ——and besides she had also the running gout and the sciatica.

" On Saturday, the eve of St. Sebastion, our Lord gave her (on a sudden) such perfect health, that she was not able to conceal the miracle, nor keep it from being divulged. At the time, when our Lord was pleased to effect this cure, she felt such an inward trembling, that her sister who was with her, thought she was upon the point of departing out of this world; then presently she perceived in her body an extraordinary change, and another, as she saith, in her soul, which was evidently bettered, with a very great contentment, to find herself now recovered, and by that means enabled to prosecure the business of the erecting of the monastery; for as to what she herself suffered, she regarded it not. On the contrary, from the beginning of her being called to God's

service,

service, she conceived such a real detestation and hatred of herself, that all her afflictions and pains seemed light to her: she had even a vehement desire of suffering, and besought our Lord, with all her heart, to exercise her herein, in all the ways possible. His Divine Majesty was not wanting in accomplishing this her desire, for in those eight years, they let her blood above five hundred times, besides so many scarifications, the marks of which she still bears in her body; in some of these they put in salt, the physicians affirming it was good to draw out the venome, and the malignity of the pain of her side; and this torture she endured above twenty times. And what is still more to be admired, immediately as soon as the physician had prescribed any one of these operations, she exceedingly longed for the time of it to come, without any fear at all; and she even encouraged the physicians in the making of their cauteries, and applying their burning irons, which she endured many times, by reason of her cancer, and on other occasions that required them. And what induced her, as she says, to long for these sufferings, was that she might try whether the desires she had of becoming a martyr were sincere and true.

" But now when she perceived herself so suddenly recovered, she consulted with her confessor, and physician, about removing to some other place, to the end it might be given out, that the change of air had cured her. But they would not consent to it; nay, the physicians themselves published the miracle, for they had already judged her incurable, by reason that she voided blood at her mouth, so corrupt, that they affirmed it to be pieces of her lungs. However she kept her bed for three days, in order to conceal the matter; but all in vain, for as her sickness could not be hid, so neither could her miraculous recovery. She told me that the August before, being one time in prayer she besought the Lord either to take

from

from her that vehement desire she had of becoming a nun, and founding a monastery, or to order things so, that it might be effected. When with great certitude she was inwardly assured by our Lord that she should shortly be well, and that in lent she should be able to go herself for a licence. She also affirms, that in all that time, though her diseases increased much upon her, yet she never lost the hope which our Lord had given her, of his doing her this favour, yea, and before that, although they had twice given her the extreme unction, and once had thought her so near her end, that the physician affirmed she would be dead, before they could bring the holy oil; yet she ceased not to trust in our Lord that she should die a nun. Her brothers and kindred, when they saw the favour and miracle our Lord had done, in giving her health so suddenly, durst no longer oppose her entering into religion, nor her going to court about the foundation, though it seemed an extravagancy to them. She staid at court three months, without effecting any thing; till she was at length determined to present a memorial to the king himself; who, understanding that it was for building a monastery for discalceate Carmelite nuns, immediately gave her leave.

" In compassing the erecting of this house, it appeared manifestly, that she had already negociated the whole business with God, who was pleased that the superiors should (readily) consent to it, though the place were so far off, and the revenue but small. But what his Majesty wills cannot fail of being effected. The nuns came at the beginning of lent, anno 1574, and were received by the people with a solemn procession, and with a general and extraordinary joy, even of the very children, to shew it was a work agreeable to God, and by which he should be served. On the same day, the two sisters took the habit with singular contentment, and Donna Catharina grew

every

every day more healthy. Her humility, obedience, and desire of being despised, sufficiently manifested the sincerity and reality of her intentions for the service of our Lord. Be he for ever blessed. Amen.

" This sister among other things told me, that above twenty years ago, she went to bed one night, with a great desire of finding out the most perfect religious order, that was upon earth, to the end that she might become a nun therein; and that she dreamed that night she was walking in a very narrow path, with extreme danger of falling into certain dreadful precipices, which appeared to her; and that she saw a discalceate friar—who said to her, sister come along with me, and conducted her to a monastery, full of nuns, where she perceived no light, but what came from the lighted candles, which they carried in their hands. She asked what order they were off; and all being silent, they lifted up their veils, and smiling shewed their chearful visages; and she affirms that she then saw the same faces, which she hath since seen of the sisters; and that the prioress took her by the hand, and said, Daughter, I would have you to be here, shewing her the rule and constitutions. And that when she awaked out of her dream, she remained in so great joy, that she seemed to have been in heaven; and that she wrote down afterward what she remembered of the rule. For a long time she met with no one, that could inform her concerning any such order, till shewing what she had written to a father of the society of Jesus, who came to Veas, and acquainting him with her desires of entering into that order, if she could find it out; he told her of these monasteries, which I had founded; and thereupon she sent a messenger to me, as I mentioned before. When my answer came to her, she was so very ill, that her confessor bid her to make herself easy, for that she might be sure no one would

would receive her for a nun, being in that condition. At this she was extremely grieved, and turning to our Lord, she said to him, with an enflamed affection. My Lord, and my God, I know thou canst do all things: O life of my soul, either take from me these desires, or shew me a way to accomplish them. This she spoke with exceeding great confidence; beseeching also the Blessed Virgin our Lady, by the grief she felt, when she beheld her Son in her arms, to intercede for her. At that instant she heard a voice in the interior of her soul, that said to her, Believe and hope that I am he that can do all things; thou shalt recover thy health; for he that could hinder so many diseases, all of them mortal, from taking effect, can more easily remove them. These words, she saith, gave her such courage, and such certainty, that she could not doubt of the accomplishment of her desire; though she still continued to be troubled with divers other maladies, till our Lord restored her to health, in the manner I have said. At present though she be somewhat infirm, yet hath she her health so as to be able to observe our rule; she finds a wonderful alacrity, shewing on all occasions such humility, that we all praise God for it——She is exceedingly weaned from her kindred and country, insomuch that she desires to be ever at a distance from them, and to this effect hath much importuned her superiors, though she be obedient withal; that for this reason, she still lives there contentedly enough, (because such is the will of superiors) and it was in obedience that she took the veil of a quire nun; for there was no persuading her to be any more than a lay-sister, till I wrote to her, chiding her for her little obedience, in willing any other thing than what the F. provincial willed; telling her, that this was not the way of greater merit; with other things, treating her roughly enough.

But

But she finds greater delight, when she is treated in this manner. Hereupon her consent was gained, though much against her will. I find nothing in this soul, but what tendeth to the well pleasing of God; and of the same opinion are all the nuns. His Divine Majesty vouchsafe to grant her perseverance with an increase of those virtues and graces which he hath given her, for his greater service and glory." Amen.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Of the foundation of the monastery of Sevil, with an account of the first nun that was admitted.

WHILST the holy mother was at Veas, expecting a licence from the council of orders, for erecting another monastery (within their jurisdiction) at the town of Caravacca, F. Jerome Gratian, apostolic commissary over all the Carmelites of the province of Andaluzia, came from Sevil to see her, and prevailed upon her to let the foundation of Caravacca rest a while, and to go and found a monastery at Sevil, with the nuns, whom she had designed for Caravacca.

" When I saw, says she, (Foundations, chap. xxviii.) it was my superior's pleasure, I presently submitted; for this grace our Lord hath bestowed on me, that I think they proceed rightly in all; though I was then resolved upon another foundation, and had also very weighty reasons for not going to Sevil .... We went in certain waggons, very close covered, for this was always our manner of travelling; and when we came to our inn, we took a chamber, good or bad, as it fell out; and set a sister at the door, who recived all we had need of, so that not even the chaplain, that came along with us, entered in thither. By making great haste we reached Sevil, the Thursday before Trinity Sunday, having suffered extreme heats in the way. I tell you, sisters, that when the sun beat with all its force upon the waggons, the going into them was like going in to a purgatory. However sometimes by thinking on hell, and other times by considering, that something was done and suffered for God, the sisters passed on very chearfully and contentedly. And indeed

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the six nuns that came with me were such persons, as that methought I durst venture to go with them, even into the country of the Moors; and that they would have had the courage, or, to say better, our Lord would have given them the courage, to have suffered any thing for his sake; for such were their discourses and desires. They were likewise much exercised in prayer and mortification; for being to live in so remote a place, I procured to have such as seemed most fit for that purpose; and all was but necessary, considering the troubles they were to go through.

"One day (before Pentecost) our Lord sent them a great cross, which was, that a violent fever seized me. I believe their prayers, and their cries to God prevailed, that the disease should be but of a short continuance; for I never before had a fever, in my life, which did not continue a long time with me; now this was so vehement, that I was delirious with it. They often brought me water, but it was so heated by the sun, that it afforded me but little refreshment. My lodging, on this occasion, was a little chamber next to the roof the house, very much exposed to, and heated by the sun, without any window, and if the door were but opened, it was all filled with sun, so as that it could not be endured: for you are to observe this climate of Andaluzia is not like Castile, but far more sultry and intolerable. The bed, they made me lye on, was so much higher on the one side than on the other, that I knew not how to stay in it; it seemed as if it were all sharp stones; and I should have thought it should be more eligible to have lain all along upon the floor.——In fine, I was of opinion, it was best to rise, and to continue our journey, esteeming it better to endure the sun abroad in the open field than in that close chamber. O! how shall it be with those poor wretches, that are in hell; who are forced to continue always fixed,

and

and never change their place? For even in the sharpest sufferings, the shifting from one misery to another seems to afford some kind of ease——and so it happened to me here. I was not troubled, as I remember, at my being sick; though the sisters were exceedingly grieved at it. But our Lord was pleased that the violence and extremity of the malady lasted not beyond that day." So far the saint, who goes on relating in the same place other incidents and troubles, which they met with in this journey, as it was ordinary for her to meet with, on the like occasions, in her other foundations. But both she and her nuns had much more to suffer, after they were come to Sevil, and that in many kinds, and for the space of near a year, as the holy mother here relates (for the greatest of all sufferings, she says she does not mention) together with an extreme want of all things, and great interior conflicts; so that, excepting the first foundation at Avila, no others, as she thinks, ever cost us so much trouble and affliction as this of Sevil. But the goodness of God wonderfully brought her through all; and so this monastery (bearing the title of St. Joseph of mount Carmel) was regularly established, and the blessed sacrament set up in the church on the Sunday before Pentecost, 1576. "His Divine Majesty grant, says she, he may be ever served therein, for in this respect all sufferings are small. And so, I hope it will be; seeing his Majesty begins already to attract some excellent souls to this monastery.

"The first that was admitted took the name of Beatrice of the mother of God, of whom I have a mind to say something, says the saint, chap. 30, which I believe, sisters, you will be glad to know. She is a young gentlewoman, daughter to a father and mother, both of them devout good christians. When she was but seven years old, an aunt of hers, who had no children of her own, desired of her mother, to let her live with her, and shew-

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ed a very great affection to her. Now there were three women, who before the child came to the aunt's house were in favour with her, and had hopes of sharing her substance amongst them after her death; who perceiving now, by the singular love she bore to this child, that she intended to leave the greatest part of it to her; took it into their heads, by the instigation of the devil, to remove her out of the way, by charging the poor innocent, with a design of poisoning her aunt; affirming that she had given to one of them, I know not what money, to buy her some arsenic for this purpose. This being told the aunt, and they all three agreeing in the same tale, she presently believed it; and so did the mother of the child, who took her home, and as Beatrice herself assured me, whipped her every day for above a year, making her also to sleep on the bare ground, to bring her to confess her so heinous a crime. And whereas the girl persisted in denying it, declaring that she did not even know what arsenic was; the mother was the more afflicted, to see her, as she thought so bold, and so hardened and obstinate in evil; as fearing by this she would never mend. It was much the girl did not own the guilt, to deliver herself from such misery and torture; but being innocent, God kept her that she always stood to the truth. And as his Divine Majesty undertakes the defence of the innocent, he inflicted on two of those women so grievous an illness, that they seemed to be distracted; whereupon taking it as a scourge from God, for their wickedness and false accusation, they sent privately for the child, and asked for forgiveness; and being at the point of death, they retracted all they had said against her. The third likewise did the same, dying in child-birth. In fine, all the three expired in great torments, in punishment of what they had made that innocent suffer. This I learned not from herself only, but also from her mother (who is

a very pious woman and of great veracity) who lamented much her hard usage, and assured me that her daughter had endured, on this occasion, many and grievous martyrdoms, our Lord, no doubt, permitting it for her greater good.

"The girl being now above twelve years old, by reading a book of the life of St. Anne, conceived a great devotion to the holy hermits of Mount Carmel, because the book related, how St. Anne's mother (Emerentiana) went often to confer with them; and from that time she took such an affection to this Order of the Blessed Virgin our Lady, that she presently made a vow of chastity, and of becoming her nun. She was much alone, and whenever she could she addicted herself wholly to mental prayer, in which God bestowed upon her eminent graces; she received also signal favours from our Lady. She would fain have become a nun immediately, but durst not, by reason of her parents; nor did she know where to find out this Order. And it was very remarkable, that there being in Sevil a monastery of our Lady of Carmel of the Rule relaxed, she never came to know it till she heard of these monasteries which I am now founding, which was not till many years after.

"When she came to be at age to be married, her parents, who by this time had lost all the rest of their children, consulted whom to match her to, being very young; and when they had already concluded upon a suitable match, and supposed that nothing more was to be done, they acquainted her with it. But she answered, that she had vowed chastity, and therefore would on no consideration consent to marry, though she were to die for the refusal. Upon this they took it into their heads (the devil blinding them, or God so permitting, that she might be his martyr) that she had been guilty of some

gross

gross misdemeanour, which made her refuse to marry: and being also highly provoked, because they had already passed their words, which now they saw they could not fulfil; they beat her in a most cruel manner, and many ways tortured her, and proceeded so far, that once they had well nigh strangled her, and it was much she did not die of it: but God, who designed her for greater matters, preserved her life. She told me, that in this extremity she felt in a manner nothing, for she remembered what St. Agnes had suffered, (our Lord bringing it into her mind) and that she even rejoiced she should die. After this she was obliged to keep her bed for three months, being unable to stir at all. It seems very strange they could imagine such a crime of one who had been always under their eye, and who was ever so pious and virtuous, and withal so charitable that she gave in alms all she could get. But those whom our Lord will honour with sufferings, he finds out several ways for. Though from that time forward for some years, he continually discovered to them more and more the virtues and excellency of their daughter; so that they now freely allowed her whatever she had a mind to bestow in alms, and her persecutions were turned into caresses and the most tender affection: but yet out of the extreme desire she had of being a nun, every thing was afflictive and grievous to her, so that she told me she lived a very sad and disconsolate life.

"Thirteen or fourteen years before F. Gratian came to Sevil, when as yet there was no mention at all of Discalceate Carmelites, she being with her father and her mother, and two other neighbours, in a certain room of their house, a friar of our Order came in, clad in coarse cloth (such as now they wear) and barefoot. They say he had a look fresh and venerable, though so old that his

beard, which was long, looked like silver threads. He came towards her, and began to speak to her in a language which neither she nor any one there understood. In the conclusion he blessed her, making thrice the sign of the cross upon her, and saying, *Beatrice, God make thee courageous:* and so he departed. None stirred all the while he was there, but remained as it were amazed. Her father asked her who he was? And she on her part thought he had known him. They being desirous therefore to understand further concerning him, presently rose in great haste to look after him, but he was never seen more. She was exceedingly comforted with this, and all the rest were astonished; for they saw the thing was of God, whereupon they much esteemed her, as we have said. All the years that passed after this (fourteen as I take it) she continued still to serve our Lord, beseeching him to accomplish her desire of being a nun, and being much afflicted at the long delay.

"When F. Jerome Gratian was come thither, (to found the convent of Discalceate Carmelites in the suburb of Triana) she went one day to hear a sermon in the church of Triana, which was near to her father's house, not knowing then who was to preach. When she saw F. Gratian step forth and receive the benediction (before he mounted the pulpit) in that habit, and bare-foot, the religious man she had formerly seen was immediately presented to her mind, and that this was the habit in which he had appeared, though his visage and age were different, for F. Gratian was not yet thirty. She told me that she almost swooned away with excessive joy, for though she had heard that a convent was founded in Triana, yet she knew not that it was of that Order. From that time she was desirous to confess to F. Gratian,

tian, and God was pleased that this also should cost her dear; for though she often attempted to go to confession to him, he would never hear her, because she was young and beautiful, and F. Gratian, like a wary person, declined discoursing with such. Till one day being in the church, in a retired place, weeping, she was taken notice of by a woman, who came and asked her what she ailed? She answered, she had long endeavoured to speak with that Father, who was then hearing confessions, and could not get him to hear her. The good woman took her along with her to F. Gratian, and desired of him that he would hear that maid; and so she made a general confession to him. He seeing such treasures of grace in her soul, was exceeding glad, comforted her, and gave her great hopes that some Discalceate nuns would come thither, and then he would soon procure her admission; and so he did, for the first thing he commanded was, that she should be the first we received, he being sufficiently satisfied concerning her soul. And accordingly she had notice when we came hither. She took great care that her parents might not know of her design, for they by no means would have yielded to her admission amongst us. She was ever wont to go to confession to the Discálceate fathers, and the convent being at some distance, her mother went not with her, but got other women to accompany her on such occasions. So she agreed with a woman, one for her eminent good works in great reputation in Sevil, to take her along with her; and on Trinity Sunday, leaving the other women that used to accompany her, when she went to confession, (who seeing her in company of that good servant of God, were content to let her go,) she took with her a bundle, in which was wrapt up her habit, and a mantle of coarse cloth, which though heavy and cumbersome, so that I know

know not how she could go with it, through the joy she had, seemed light, and became easy to her. She only feared lest any one should stop her, or examine her, why she went laden in this manner; it being so unusual a thing for one of her condition. O what doth not the love of God do! How did she already despise the honour of the world, and forget herself; fearing only the being disappointed in accomplishing her desire. In this manner she came to our monastery in Sevil, and presently we opened her the gate. I sent afterward to acquaint her mother with it, who came presently to us like one distracted; but was soon appeased, and said she now perceived the grace which God had conferred on her daughter, and though she felt some grief, that she might not speak to her, yet it was not so immoderate as is usual with others; and she still continued to give us alms as at first.

"The spouse of Jesus Christ began now to enjoy her so long wished for happiness, being so humble, and desirous of doing all the meanest offices of the house, that we had much ado to take the broom out of her hand. She that a little before had lived in such plenty and delights in her father's house, found now her ease and recreation in labour. Her joy was such, that in a very few days she grew fat, at which her father and mother wondering were so pleased, that afterward they were glad to see her a nun. However that she might not enjoy so great a good without suffering, two or three months before the time came of her being professed, she met with strong temptations, from the apprehensions of extraordinary difficulties. She seemed to have forgot the many years she had patiently sustained, in expecting that happiness she now possessed; and the devil so tormented her, that she remained as it were out of hope,

without

without being able to help herself. Yet without using much force, she so overcame those temptations, that even in their greatest violence, and in the midst of the torments they put her to, she determined to make her profession. Our Lord, who now intended no longer to try her, visited her three days before her profession, comforting her exceedingly, and drove away the tempter from her. She was so overjoyed, that for those three days she seemed almost beside herself with excessive delight: for the favour was extraordinary.

"A few days after she had entered into the monastery, her father died, and her mother took the habit in the same house, bestowing all she had in alms; so here lived together mother and daughter, with great contentment, and edification of all the nuns, serving that Lord from whom they received so eminent a grace. Within less than a year there came another young gentlewoman to be a nun, much against the inclination of her parents; and thus our Lord goes on furnishing this his house with persons so desirous of serving him, that no austerity of life or rule, no solitude whatsoever, or strictness of enclosure can deter them. May he be for ever blessed and pleased. *Amen.*

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The foundation of the monastery of Caravacca. A persecution is raised against all the Discalceate, and a stop is put for four years to the foundations. The storm at length is appeased.

"BEING at St. Joseph's in Avila, says the holy mother (Foundations, chap. 31.) ready to go to the foundation of Veas, there came a messenger, sent on purpose by a lady of Caravacca, called Donna Catharina de Etolora, upon the following occasion. There were come to her house, (much moved by a sermon they had heard of a father of the Society of Jesus) three young gentlewomen, resolved not to go out thence, till a monastery should be erected in the same place. It was doubtless a thing agreed on with that lady, who was she that afterward assisted them in this foundation. They were well descended, the daughters of the prime gentlemen of that place. One of them had her father living, whose name was Rodrigo de Moya, a man of singular prudence, and a great servant of God. Amongst them they had means enough to attempt such a work. They had notice of that which our Lord had done in the founding of these our houses, being informed thereof by some of the fathers of the society of Jesus; which made them desirous the monastery should be of our Order.

"When I understood the desire and fervour of those souls, and that they had sent from so remote parts, to find out this order of our Lady of Mount Carmel, I was much edified therewith, and desired to second their good intentions; wherefore understanding that the town was near

near Veas, I took along with me more nuns than usually, (for, by their letters, it seemed the business was easy to be concluded) meaning to go thither when I had finished the foundation of Veas. But our Lord having determined otherwise, my designs availed little; for the licence they had obtained of the council of Orders was not such as I desired, so that though I had before been resolved to go thither, for the present I deferred it. Moreover upon enquiring in Veas, where this town of Caravacca stood, and understanding that it was so far off, and the way from thence to it so very bad, that they who were to go to visit the nuns must endure much trouble, and that this might offend our superiors, I had no great mind to go to found a monastery there. But yet because I had put them in hopes, I desired F. Julian d'Avila (our chaplain) and Antonio Gaitano, who usually attended us in our foundations) to go thither, and see how the matter was, and if they thought fit, to break off the business. They found it to proceed very coldly, not on the part of the three gentlewomen, who were to be the nuns, but on the part of the Lady Catharina, who was the person that managed the whole affair, and kept the young women in an apartment by themselves, so that it already looked like a monastery enclosed. These young gentlewomen that were desirous to be nuns, continued so constant in their resolution, and understood so well how to discourse, and treat with F. Julian and Antonio Gaitano, that they gained them. Whereupon before they departed, they drew up the writings, leaving them much satisfied. And they on their side so liked both the gentlewomen and the place, that they highly commended them to me, and assured me of the contrary to that which had been told me of the badness of the way. When I saw the business already concluded

and,

and the licence only delayed, I dispatched thither again good Antonio Gaitano, desiring him to go, and put up a grate and a turn in the house appointed for the nuns, that possession might be taken presently. Rodrigo de Moya, father to one of the gentlewomen, freely giving us a part of his own house. But when they had got the licence, and I was upon my departure thither, I understood that it had a clause in it, that the monastery must be subject to the commendatory: which I could not approve of, and so a new licence was to be obtained; which upon my writing to the king (Philip the Second) he as being a great friend and patron of Religious, that are strict observers of their Rule, readily granted.

"In the mean time I departed from Sevil, by command of F. Gratian the commissary; and so the poor young women continued shut up as before, till the first day of the following year. The licence indeed was soon got, but I being so far off, and so full of troubles, could not presently satisfy them. I pitied them, for they often wrote to me in great distress, as not knowing how to brook so long a delay; but for me to go then was impossible, the foundation of Sevil not being yet finished. So F. Gratian concluded, that the nuns who were designed for Caravacca, should go without me. I procured they should have for their prioress, Ann of St. Albert, who, I was confident, would demean herself very well in that office, being much better than I. So taking with them all necessary provisions, they departed, two of our Discalceate fathers accompanying them. They were received with great joy of the people, but more especially of those three gentlewomen that lived so recluse. They founded the monastery, setting up the Blessed Sacrament therein, on New-years's Day, 1576. The same day two of these gentlewomen took the habit;

for

for as to the third, who was very melancholy, it was thought fit she should return home, to continue there with a sister of hers. See, my daughters, the judgments of God, and the obligation we have to serve him, since he hath done us the favour to permit us to persevere to the making our profession, and to live all our life-time in the house of God, as daughters of the Blessed Virgin. Our Lord was pleased to make use of the intention of this gentlewoman and of her estate, for the founding this monastery, and afterward at the time when she should enjoy what she so much desired, her courage failed her, and a melancholic humour took possession of her, on which we too often lay the blame of our imperfection and inconstancy." So the holy mother. But we must add, that this same gentlewoman, about three months after, when F. Gratian visited the house, was admitted to the habit; and that all the three in their due time made their profession.

"And here, says the Saint, whether it pleased God to give me some rest, or displeased the devil, that so many monasteries were built, in which our Lord was so well served, a stop was put to our founding. For before I left Sevil, (a general chapter being held by the Order) there came a command from the difinitors, not only that I should found no more monasteries, but that I should choose one that I liked to live in, without ever going out of it on any pretence whatsoever; which was a kind of imprisonment. And what was still worse, and afflicted me the most, was that our F. General was now displeased with me, and that upon no other ground but the information of some passionate persons. Together with this, they charged me at the same time with two other very gross accusations. I tell it you, my sisters, that you may see the goodness of Almighty God, and how our Lord never

never forsakes them that desire to serve him; for all this not only did not trouble me, but so exceedingly delighted me that I could not contain myself, for my joy was such as I could not conceal. The reason of this I do not understand, for in other great crosses, from murmurings and contradictions, which I have heretofore sustained, never any such thing befel me; and even one of those things they charged me with, was most insupportable. For that of prohibiting me to found any more monasteries, abstracting from the displeasure of our most reverend F. General, was a great ease to me, as having often desired to end my life in peace and quietness; although they who procured this prohibition, had no such intention, but rather thought to do me the greatest displeasure in the world: however possibly they had other good purposes therein. At some other times likewise the great oppositions, injuries and murmurings, which I suffered in founding, have afforded me consolation; but I remember not that ever I felt such a joy as this in any of my troubles or afflictions. I confess, at some other times, any of the three things which were at once laid on me, would have much troubled me. But I conceive, my extraordinary joy at this time, arose from my thinking, that since the creatures paid me in this coin, I placed my satisfaction in the Creator. For I have ever thought, and I see it very clearly, that whosoever sets his heart on earthly things or human applause, is strangely cheated, they being all so vain and inconstant. O blessed be thou, O Lord, my God, who art always the same, and never changest! Whoever serves thee to the end, shall live with thee, without end, in a blessed eternity.

The holy mother, in obedience to this command of the general chapter of the Order, chose for her place of residence

residence the monastery she had erected at Toledo, where she remained confined for about four years, during which time no foundations at all were made. On the contrary, all the Discalceates of both sexes suffered great and terrible persecutions, from the heavy accusations and violent oppositions of almost all the brethren of the mitigated Rule, and from the Pope's nuncio, Sega, who succeeded Hormaneto, the great favourer of the Reformed. This new nuncio seemed to be resolved upon the ruin of the Reformation; and hereupon began with extreme rigour to condemn, imprison and banish those whom he conceived most likely to make resistance. Nor did he cease, till the King, being fully informed of the life and virtue of the Discalceates, undertook their protection, and appointed four assessors, three of them religious men, who jointly with the nuncio should examine and judge their cause. Thus the innocence and virtue of the Discalceates were vindicated, and they were restored to their former liberty. Not long after, by the king's means, the Discalceate were formed into a distinct body with provincials of their own, independent of the Calceate; and thus at length a lasting peace was established between them.

As the holy mother had a great share in this persecution, not only by the sufferings she endured in her own person, but also by the fellow-feeling she had for all her children, so it is not to be doubted but that the happy issue of the whole, to God's greater glory, and the great advancement of her Order, is in a great measure to be attributed to her prayers. The following letter written from her prison, to F. John of Jesus, a discalceate Carmelite of Pastrana; declaring to him the revelation she had concerning their approaching deliverance, and the happy success of their reform, is too remarkable to be

passed

passed over, in this place: especially as it affords great light, both with regard to the sufferings of the discalceate at this time, and the dispositions of the soul of the blessed mother, under these afflictions.

"She begins her epistle thus, Jesus, Maria, Joseph be with the soul of my father John of Jesus. I received your Reverences letter, in this prison, wherein I am with much delight, because I endure all these troubles for my God, and for my Order. That which grieves me, my father, is the affliction your Reverence has for me: this it is that torments me. Therefore, I beseech you all not to be troubled for me; since I may say with St. Paul (though not with his perfection and sanctity) that prisons, labours, persecutions, tortures, disgraces and affronts, for my Saviour, and for my order, are delights and favours to me. I never saw myself more free from anxieties, than now. It is the property of our Lord to help the afflicted and imprisoned, with his special aid and favour. I give my God a thousand thanks; and it is just we all should thank him, for the favour he had done me in this prison. O, my son, and my father, what greater delight or sweetness, can there be, than in suffering for this our good God? were not the Saints in their centre, and in their joy, when they were suffering for their Christ, and for God? This is the most secure, and certain way to God; for the cross to be our joy and delight And therefore, my father, let us seek the cross; let us embrace afflictions: wo to the discalceate, wo to us, if we are without crosses and afflictions.

"You tell me, in your letter, how the Lord Nuncio hath ordered that there should be no more Discalceate convents founded; and that those already erected should be dissolved; and this at the instance of F. General: and that he is most implacable in my regard, terming me a troublesome

troublesome woman and a vagabond; and that all the world is up in arms against me, and my sons; who are forced to hide themselves, in the rocks of the mountains, and the most obscure houses, that they may not be found and taken. This it is I lament, this it is I resent, this it is that afflicts me, that for such a sinner, and so bad a nun as I am, my sons must endure so many persecutions and crosses, abandoned by all the world; but not by our Lord; for of this I am certain, that he will not forsake us, nor ever abandon those, who so dearly love him.

" And that you my son, with the rest of your brethren may rejoice, I will tell you one thing of great consolation: but this must remain a secret between me and your Reverence, and F. Mariano; for it would trouble me that others should know it. You must understand, Father, how a certain nun here [she speaks of herself] being in prayer, on the eve of my father St. Joseph, he appeared to her in the company of the Virgin and her Son: and she saw how they [the blessed Virgin and St. Joseph] stood praying for the Reformation: and our Lord told her, that hell, and many upon earth, made great rejoicings, to see, to their thinking, the Order dissolved; but that at the instant when the Nuncio gave sentence for dissolving it, God confirmed it: he bade her also, that they should apply to the king, whom in every thing they should find as a father—with several things not fit to be committed to a letter: and that within twenty days I should come out of prison; such being the will of God. And therefore let us all rejoice, for from this day forward the Discalceate Reformation shall go on advancing.

" What your Reverence is to do, is to continue in the house of Madam Mendoza, till you hear further from me: and F. Mariano shall go, and present my letter to the King, and another to the Duchess of Pastrana. Let not

your

your Reverence stir out of the house, lest they apprehend you: for we shall soon see ourselves at liberty. I am well and lusty, God be blessed. My companion is displeased. Recommend us to God, and say a Mass in thanksgiving to my father St. Joseph—God make you a holy and perfect Religious Discalceate."

Wednesday, March 25, 1579.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

The foundation of the monastery at Villanova. The eremitical life, austerities and penances of the Lady Catharine de Cardona. She appears after her death to the Holy Mother.

" IN the beginning of these great troubles, says the Holy Mother [Foundations, Chap. xxxii.] I being at Toledo, come back from the foundation of Sevil, in the year 1576; a priest of Villanova de Xara brought me letters from that corporation, and came to confer with me about founding a monastery there, and receiving for nuns nine women, that were got together in an hermitage of the glorious St. Ann, which had by it a little house, wherein they had lived for some years, and that with such recollection and sanctity, as induced all the people of the town to interest themselves for procuring them a monastery, to accomplish their desires. The curate also of the place, Doctor Ervias, a learned man and of great virtue

virtue, aided them what he could in this holy work. It seemed to me not to be feasible, for divers reasons—however I communicated the affair to my confessor, who was Dr. Velasquez, Canon and Professor at Toledo, a man very learned and virtuous, the now bishop of Osma: for I never used to do any thing on my own head, but with the advice of such persons. When he saw the letters, and understood the business, he advised me not wholly to give it up, but to return them a civil answer: because since God had joined so many hearts together in the same design, it argued, he intended to be served thereby. I therefore ordered my answer so, as neither absolutely to accept of, nor yet to give up the proposed foundation. In which nothing more was done till the year 1580.

" At this time it fell out, that F. Antony of Jesus, (his banishment being at an end) came to pass some time at the convent of our Lady of Succour (founded by Donna Catharina de Cardona, for the discalceate Carmelites) at the distance of about nine miles from Villanova. Both he, and the prior of this convent F. Gabriel of the Assumption were intimate acquaintances of Dr. Ervias, and went together to preach at Villanova: and upon this occasion conferred with those holy sisters, and were so satisfied concerning their virtue, and withal so far disposed in their favour and persuaded by the people, and the Doctor, that they took the business to heart and urged me very earnestly to admit this foundation . . . . For my part I was so afraid of admitting these sisters, as apprehending some faction, opposition, on their part, against the nuns that should go thither—as likewise because I saw no certainty for their maintenance—that I fell into a great confusion and perplexity. I perceived afterward it was the devil: because though our Lord has given me courage enough, yet I was at that time so pusillanimous, that methought I had no confidence at all in God. But at length the prayers

of those holy servants of God prevailed. For one day after communion, as I was recommending the affair to our Lord, as I did often (fearing nothing more than lest I might, by my standing out, hinder the spiritual proficiency of these souls; because all my desire was ever to find out some means by which our Lord might be glorified; and that there might be some to serve him in greater perfection) his Majesty gave me a sharp reprehension, saying: With what treasures have the monasteries been built, that hitherto were founded? Never doubt the admitting of this house, which will turn to my great service, and the benefit of souls. O how powerful and efficacious are the words of God! For the understanding not only apprehends them, but is enlightened by them, to know the truth; and the will is disposed to be ready to execute them. And so it befel me here: for I not only (upon these words) willingly admitted this monastery, but thought I had done all in suffering myself to be swayed with human reasons; having seen (on so many occasions) that which his Divine Majesty hath effected for this Order, so much to transcend reason.

"Wherefore being now resolved to admit this foundation, I conceived it would be necessary for me to go thither, with those nuns that were to stay there, for divers reasons that presented themselves to me: though nature had a great reluctance to it; because I came to Malagon (where I then was) very sick; and continued so still. But knowing that God was thereby to be served, I gave an account thereof to my superior (F. Angelus de Salazar the provincial) desiring him to appoint what he thought best. He sent me a licence, and a command to go thither in person—taking with me such nuns as I best liked . . . F. Antony of Jesus, and F. Gabriel the prior came to fetch us: the people furnishing us with necessaries.—In travelling I found myself so well, as if I had never been sick: and greatly

greatly wondering at it, I considered how much it imports us not to regard our want of health, when opportunities of serving God present themselves—We were to pass by the convent of our Lady of Succour, which was nine miles from Villanova, and to stay there, whilst notice was given of our coming; it being so before agreed on by those Fathers we went with, whom it was fit I should in all things obey. This convent stands in a desert, a very agreeable solitude; and when we drew nigh, the Religious came out to receive their prior in decent order. As these walked in procession barefoot, with their poor mantles of coarse stuff, they caused devotion in us all: for my my own part, I felt a great tenderness, imagining myself to be in that flourishing age of our holy fathers. They seemed in that field so many odoriferous flowers: and such I believe they are in the eyes of God; for in my opinion he is faithfully served there. They went to the church saying the Te Deum, with voices much mortified. The passage to the church is under ground, as through a Grott, which brought to my mind that of our holy Father Elias. Indeed I felt so great an inward joy (on this occasion) that I would have accounted a much longer journey very well bestowed: only I was exceeding sorry for the death of that blessed woman Catharina de Cardona, by those means God founded this convent; in regard I had not the happiness to see her, which I had very much desired.

"I conceive it will not be amiss to relate here something of her life; and by what means our Lord would have this convent founded, which has been so exceedingly advantageous to many souls of the places adjoining—And likewise that beholding the great penance of this holy woman, you may see my sisters, how short we come of what she performed; and may animate yourselves afresh to serve our Lord: since there is no reason why we should be behind her, we who descend not from so noble a stock:

for though that signify nothing, I mention it, because she had lived in the world, in abundant plenty, suitable to her quality, as being extracted from the dukes of Cardona; whence she was called Donna Catharina de Cardona: but after she betook herself to a life of penance, in writing sometimes to me, she subscribed only the Sinner. Whilst she lived in the world, amongst people of the highest quality, she had an extraordinary care of her soul, and did much penance; having still an extreme desire of retiring some whither, that she might enjoy God alone, and wholly apply herself to penetential exercises, without any one's disturbing her. But her confessors, with whom she conferred about it, would not consent to it: for the world being now so much set upon what they call discretion, and human prudence, without rememberiug the extraordinary privileges, and favours, God did the saints of both sexes, that served him in the Desert, is not to be wondered that they thought it an extravagancy. But since his Majesty fails not to favour sincere desires, and furnish means to put them in execution, he provided that she should go to confession to F. Francis de Torroz a Franciscan, whom I know very well and hold for a Saint—Who encouraged her to follow, without any longer delay, the call of his Divine Majesty. Upon this she applied to a certain hermit of Alcala, intreating him to conduct her to some solitary place, without acquainting any one therewith. He brought her to the solitude, where this convent now stands —where he found a little cavern, that would scarce hold her, and there he left her. But what an excess of divine love was that, which brought her thither; without taking any care for her diet, or regarding the dangers she might be exposed to, or the infamy she might incur in the world, when she was no where to be heard of? How inebriated must this my soul have been with the love of God; how wholly absorpt in him; and only anxious lest any one should

should hinder her of enjoying her sweet spouse; how resolute to have no more acquaintaince with any thing of the world? For by this step she deprived herself at once of all the delights the world could afford.

"In this cave she lived eight years; and passed many days without eating any thing but the wild roots and herbs of the desert. For when the three loaves were consumed, which the hermit had left with her, she had nothing else to support her: till she was discovered by a shepherd accidentally passing that way, who afterward supplied her from time to time with meal; for her diet was some little cakes baked by the sun, and nothing else; and this she took but once in three days.—She disciplined herself with a sharp chain, and often continued it for a long time together. Her hair cloths she wore were extreme rough and prickling: for a certain woman in return from a pilgrimage lodged with her, told me that pretending to be asleep, she saw her put off her hair-shirts, that were all bloody, and cleanse them. The devils were also very troublesome to her, for (as she herself related to our nuns at Toledo) they appeared to her sometimes in the shape of great mastiff dogs, very fierce and terrible, leaping upon her shoulders; and at other times like serpents; but she feared them not at all.—Before the convent was founded in this place, she went to hear mass in a church of our Lady of Mercy, which was a mile off, and sometimes made this journey on her knees. Her clothes were of the natural colour of the wool; and her inner garment of sacking was made so, that all thought her to be a man. Now after she lived here a solitary for so many years, our Lord was pleased that the fame of her sanctity should be divulged: whereupon great numbers out of devotion, and the opinion they had of her extraordinary virtue, came to visit her, so that she could not free herself from company. She spoke with loving charity to all—And

happy

happy did they think themselves who could speak with her.—She was so wearied, and afflicted to see the great multitude that came to her, that she would have gone to some other distant part of the country, where none might take notice of her; and to this purpose she sent for the hermit that brought her thither, that he might convey her to another place; but she found he was dead.

" After she had been eight years in this cave, which by the number of those that came to visit her, was now enlarged, she fell into an extreme sickness, of which she even thought she should die; and yet for all her disease, she would still continue in that grott, with admirable patience. After this she began to have a great desire to erect a convent of religious men in this place; which desire continued with her for some time, without knowing what order to have it of. When behold one day when she was in prayer before a certain crucifix, which she always carried with her, our Lord shewed her a white mantle; giving her to understand that the convent should be of discalceate Carmelites; of whom she had heard nothing before, nor so much as knew that they were at all in the world; and indeed at that time there were only two convents of them founded, that of Manzera, and that of Pastrana. Upon informing herself touching this order, and hearing there was a convent of it in Pastrana, she having in times past maintained a great correspondence with the princess of Evoli, wife to prince Ruy Gomez, lord of Pastrana, went thither, in order to procure the erecting this convent, which she so much desired. And here she took the habit of our lady of Carmel; though not with any purpose of being a nun, or making her profession; for she had never any inclination to that, our Lord guiding her another way.—And now she began to set about procuring the means for erecting her convent; and for this purpose she went to the court, which before she willingly

forsook;

forsook; (it being now no small cross to her to appear there) where also she wanted not many troubles, and murmurings. Wheresoever she went, when she was abroad, the people crowded about her, so that she could not disengage herself from them; and they cut off pieces of her habit, and of her cloak. When she went to Toledo, she lodged with our nuns; and they all affirmed to me, that the fragrancy was so great that issued from her, that even her habit and her girdle, after she had left it off (for they took it away and gave her another) retained that smell; a thing which moved them exceedingly to praise our Lord

" At court, and other places, she got much alms, for building the convent; and procured a licence for it; so that it was founded out of hand. The church was built where her grott was, and they made her another, apart out of the way, where there was a sepulchre made of embossed work; and there she spent most of her time, night and day; never going but to the church service. She lived not above five years and a half after founding the convent.—She died in the year 1577——and lies buried in a tomb, within a chapel of our lady's, to whom she was singularly devoted. For her sake, this convent is held in great veneration; so that the same devotion still seems to continue here—especially in beholding that solitude, and grott, in which she lived, before the convent was built. I received extraordinary consolation all the time I was there——and one day after I had communicated in that holy church, a very great rapture came upon me,—in which by an intellectual vision was represented to me this holy woman, as a body glorified, and some angels with her, bidding me not to grow weary; but endeavour to go on with these foundations .... She told me also another thing, which there is no occasion I should commit to writing. I was much comforted, and conceived

ceived an exceeding great desire of sufferings; and I hope in the goodness of our Lord, by the assistance of this Saint's prayers, I shall be able in something to serve him. You see here, my daughters and sisters, how soon all her troubles were at an end, whereas the glory she now enjoys, shall last forever. Let us then force ourselves for the love of our Lord, to follow the steps of this our sister, debasing ourselves as she did; for we shall quickly come to our journeys end, since all passeth so swiftly away.

" We arrived at Villanova, the first Sunday in Lent, February 21, 1580, where we were received with great joy of all the people; the whole corporation, with Dr. Ervias, their pastor, coming forth to meet us. From the parish church we were conducted, with a solemn procession, and decent order, to St. Ann's hermitage; where on the same day about the time of high-mass, the blessed sacrament was set up in the church. When we came to the house, those good sisters were all at the door within; every one apparelled after their own fashion, according as they had entered in thither—but very modest, and in a manner, which shewed the little esteem they made of themselves (and of the world) and the great penance they had done. They received us with many tears of joy; which, as plainly appeared, were not counterfeit. With this their joy, was likewise seen their singular virtue, their humility, their readiness to obey the prioress in all things, together with their great obsequiousness to all the other sisters that were come to the foundation; perfectly spending themselves, that they might pleasure them in any thing. All their fear was, lest the sisters should return back again, affrighted perhaps with their extreme poverty, and the meanness of their little cottage. None of them had ever governed the rest; but every one with great humility laboured and wrought what they could.

For

For they would never ask alms, lest the people might think they had retired thither,, to be maintained by them. Two that were the ancientest managed all the necessary business; the rest never spoke with any. Not to mention their other rigorous penances, in fasting much, eating little, lying hard, and living in a very strait house, with so strict an inclosure as they always kept: they slept very little, that so they might have more time for working for their living, and for saying their prayers, in which they spent many hours, and on Sundays and Festivals the whole; being directed therein by the books of F. Lewis of Granada, and of F. Peter of Alcantara . . . . . And they did every thing, with as great concord and harmony, as if they had one to govern them, like a superioress. All this afforded me great occasion of praising God; and the more I conversed with them, the more I was pleased that I was come; may his Divine Majesty vouchsafe to be always served in this house; and let all his creatures praise him for ever and ever, to all eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The foundation of the monasteries of Palentia, Soria, Burgos, and Granada.

" 8. AT my return from the foundation of the monastery at Villanova—says the holy mother (foundations, chap. xxxiii.) my superior commanded me to go to Valladolid, at the request of the bishop of Palentia (the same who before admitted our first monastery in Avila, whilst he was bishop there) who, as he had all along favoured us, in every thing that was for the advancement of our order, so now upon his being translated to the bishoprick of Palentia, desired the erecting of another monastery of this

this holy order in that city. When I was come to Valladolid, I fell so extremely ill, that all thought I should die. And I was now so averse from founding, and so far from thinking, I could do any good therein, that although the prioress of our monastery at Valladolid, who was very desirous of this foundation, importuned me exceedingly to accept of it, I could not assent, nor could find any ground for it; because on the one hand the monastery was to be founded in poverty; and on the other, I was told the town was very poor, and would not be able to maintain the nuns. I was a year deliberating concerning the erecting this foundation, together with that of Burgos; and the more I thought of it, the more inconveniences I found in it; though I went on purpose to Valladolid for nothing else. I know not whether it were the extremity of the disease, and the weakness I lay under, or the devil, who laboured to hinder the great good that was afterwards done there. The truth is, I am astonished, and extremely afflicted, (and of this I many times complain to my Lord) to see how the poor soul shares in the infirmities of the body, and must perforce follow, and conform to its laws and conditions—which methinks is one of the greatest miseries of human life. One morning, after I had communicated, being in these doubts, and quite irresolute about erecting either of these foundations, I besought our Lord to enlighten me, both in this and every thing else, that I might do his will in all things; for my tepidity went not so far, that it could ever in the least diminish this desire. Our Lord, as it were chiding, said to me, What art thou afraid of? When was I at any time wanting to thee? I am the same now that I was; neglect not the erecting of these two foundations. O great and powerful God! How do thy words differ from those of men! From that instant I became so valiant and resolute, that all the world could not have

have prevailed, by whatsoever opposition, to have hindered me from attempting what here he enjoined me. I began presently to negociate the business; and our Lord also began to afford me the means (for I had nothing before hand towards either of the foundations; but this discouraged me not, for I use to begin so) and now though I was not as yet quite recovered of my illness, I resolved to set out for Palentia, notwithstanding the season was very cold and sharp; for we began our journey on Holy Innocents day, in the year 1580. A gentleman of Palentia had offered us a house of his for the present; and I had written to a canon of that city whom I understood to be a servant of God (and such persons our Lord usually raises up in all our foundations, to assist us, as knowing the little I am able to do) to clear the house, with all possible secrecy, that we might enter into it without noise. The canon (Reinoso) not only punctually executed what I had desired of him, but also provided us with beds, and many other conveniencies—whereof we had need enough; for when we came thither, it was extreme cold; and the day before had been exceeding tedious, with a mist also, so very thick, that we could scarce see one another. However we did not rest till we had fitted up a place for the saying mass the next day, before any one knew that we were come (for this I have found to be the best expedient in these foundations, to prevent their being obstructed, or disturbed by the enemy of all good) and so it was brought about, that betimes the next morning, a priest that came with us, a great servant of God, said mass for us—and so this monastery was founded on that day in which according to our breviary, we say 'the office of the holy king David, to whom I am much devoted."

And here the Saint relates, how she was afterward directed by our Lord in receiving the holy communion, to

establish

establish this monastery in a church and hermitage of the same city, called our Lady de la Strada, a place to which many of the town and of the country adjoining, resorted for devotion, but as the hermitage was solitary, and they that came thither used to watch the whole night, many extravagancies and disorders were there committed, which our Lord was pleased to remedy, as he signified to the holy mother, by ordering her to erect her monastery there, and so putting a stop to all those inconveniencies. As to the rest, the Saint before she concludes this relation, extols highly the great charity she met with in the people of Palentia, both in general and particular, which seemed to her to be a pattern of that of the primitive christians, or at least far excelling that which is usually found in the world, in these degenerate ages.

2. From Palentia the holy mother went to Soria, in order to found a monastery there, of which she treats in the thirty-fourth chapter of her Foundations. She was invited thither by Dr. Velasquez, Bishop of Osma, who had been her confessor all the four years she lived in Toledo. The town of Soria was in his diocese, and from thence "he wrote me a letter, says the Saint, acquainting me that a gentlewoman, his penitent, had communicated to him her desire of erecting there a monastery for nuns: and that he had persuaded her to found it of our Order: that he had told her that he would procure me to come thither for the founding of it; and therefore that I must not fail to come, and that he would send to fetch me. I was exceeding glad, because besides that it was like to be a good foundation, I had a great desire to communicate to him some things relating to my soul, and to see him, for by reason of the extraordinary profit and advantage I had before received through

through him, I bore him a singular affection. The name of the lady that desired to found this monastery was Donna Beatrice de Viamonte, of an illustrious and very noble house, descended from the kings of Navarre. She had been married some years, but had no children, and as she was very rich, for sometime before had determined to erect a monastery of nuns. And when she had consulted the bishop, and was informed by him concerning this order, she was so taken with it, that afterward she did nothing but urge him to get the foundation dispatched. She is one of an affable disposition, generous, a lover of penance, in a word a great servant of God. She offered to bestow upon us a fair house which she had in Soria, together with five hundred crowns of yearly rent, and the bishop proffered us a church that was hard by the house. I acquainted F. Provincial, who was then here, with all this, and both he and all his friends thought fit that I should go and found the monastery; of which I was very glad for the reasons before mentioned. I presently caused the nuns to come, whom I was to take thither with me, who were seven in number; and a servant of the bishop, one very useful and diligent, came to fetch us. F. Nicolas de Jesu Maria, a Discalceate friar (afterward the first general of the congregation,) with a lay companion of his, went along with us. We suffered very little inconvenience in this journey, because he whom the bishop had sent to conduct us, treated us very liberally, and good lodging was provided for us: for after we had entered into the diocese of Osma, wherever we came, I perceived the affection they bore their prelate was such, that upon mentioning that it was his will, they caressed us very much, and afforded us good accommodation; and I rejoiced extremely to hear how well they spoke of his sanctity.

"We arrived at Soria about five in the evening, the day after the octave of Corpus Christi, (anno 1681): we went by the holy bishop's house, who stood there at a window, and gave us his benediction, which not a little cheered me, he being both a prelate and a saint. The lady our foundress stood expecting us at the gate of her house, where the monastery was to be; and it was with difficulty we could get in, there was so great a crowd of the people waiting there to see us. The lady had provided a very fair large hall, to serve us for a church, in which we might hear mass till a gallery should be made to pass to the church, which the bishop gave us; so the next day, being the feast of our holy prophet Eliseus, the first mass was said, and possession taken.

The holy mother here adds in commendation of the Bishop of Osma, "that he let not a day nor an hour pass, without labouring (in his functions). Though he was not well, and had even lost the sight of one eye; which, says she, was the only affliction I had there, being extremely sorry that a sight so useful and beneficial in the service of our Lord should be lost. But he whose judgments are secret, afforded hereby to his servant for merit, (for he continued to labour no less than before) and of shewing by this trial, how well he conformed himself to the will of God. He told me it troubled him no more than if it had not happened; and that sometimes he thought it would not grieve him, if he should lose also the sight of the other eye, for that then he would live in a hermitage, and serve God without any further obligation. For his own inclination had ever been to a solitary life, before he was bishop, and so he told me sometimes: yea, he had almost resolved to quit all, and to betake himself to a hermitage. But this I could not endure to hear of, as conceiving him exceeding

ceeding useful to the church of God; and therefore I wished him to be what he now is. Yet on the day I heard the bishoprick was given him, I was in a very great disorder, imagining I saw him charged with a huge load, so that I could not rest nor be at ease. Upon this I went into the quire to recommend him to our Lord; and his Majesty immediately quieted me, telling me it would be greatly for his service, as is now sufficiently evident. Notwithstanding the pain he hath in his eye, besides others which are very troublesome, and the constant labour he goeth through, he fasts four days in the week, and performs several other penances: his table is very ordinary, and his diet plain. When he visits his dioceseshe goes on foot; he entertains no servants but such as are very virtuous and devout, and he seldom trusts any matters of importance to pass through any other hands but his own. For two years after his entering into his bishoprick, he endured here the most violent persecutions that could be, from false accusations; but though his enemies went to the court, where they thought most to prejudice him, his extraordinary virtue already appearing throughout his whole diocese, they could do little against him; and he hath suffered with so great perfection, doing good to them that did him evil, that he hath confounded his adversaries. Notwithstanding his many employments, he neglects not to steal time for prayer. Methinks I am almost inebriated with the commendations of this holy man, though what I have said is little. But this I have here recorded, that such as come after us may know who he was, that first procured the foundation of this our monastery of the most Holy Trinity in Soria." So far the Saint.

Amongst the letters of the holy mother, published together with her other works, there are two directed to

this

this prelate: in the first of these she gives him, as to her confessor, an account of the state of her soul: in the latter, upon his having enjoined her to recommend him in a particular manner to our Lord; she assures him she had punctually obeyed, and that after representing to our Lord the graces which she knew he had already bestowed on him, such as humility, charity, zeal of souls, &c. and earnestly begging for him an increase of all these virtues, that his Divine Majesty might render him every way so accomplished as that dignity required, in which he had placed him: it was signified to her that what was principally necessary to all perfection, was yet wanting to him, viz: fervor and perseverance in the exercise of mental prayer, this being as a lighted torch, which enlightens the soul with the light of truth, and procures for her the unction and spirit of God, and maintains her union with him. Whereupon she exhorts him to patience, courage and constancy in this holy exercise, in spite of the importunity of distractions, or any other oppositions, and shews him the directions our Lord would have him to follow in this exercise. And it is not to be questioned but he profited much by this divine admonition, as he afterward shewed, when resigning up his archbishopric of Compostella, (to which he was translated from Osma) he wholly dedicated the latter part of his life to retirement and devotion.

3. The foundation of Soria was followed by that of Burgos, which the holy mother undertook by express commandment of our Lord, as we have seen above, in treating of the foundation of Palentia. And now after her return from Soria to her convent in Avila, they were for procuring out of hand a licence from the city, for founding a monastery in Burgos. But whereas it seemed no way fitting for the saint herself, considering all the

distempers

distempers she had then upon her, (it being the last year of her mortal life) to make so long a journey as this, in that cold winter season, which was very contrary to her health; especially after being so lately returned from a journey so tedious and sharp, as that was from Soria to Avila; and therefore she was thinking in her place to send the Prioress of Palentia, for this foundation of Burgos. Our Lord again spoke to her, and said: regard not cold, for *I am the true heat; the devil useth all his power to hinder this foundation; do thou use all thine for me, to get it finished: and neglect not the going in person, for it will avail much.* This determined her to go out of hand, notwithstanding the great snows and colds, and the heavy load of her sicknesses and infirmities, with which she was very much afflicted during the whole course of this foundation. She began her journey in the middle of winter, accompanied with F. Gratian the provincial, who went with her in order to take care of her; she being now so ancient and infirm, the season also exceeding sharp, and the roads so very bad, that they went even in danger of their lives from the waters that had overflowed their ways. But our Lord told the holy mother, *they might safely go, and that she should not fear, for he would be with them.* However both she and all her company endured very much both day and night in that journey, which was long and tedious; and for her part, besides a fever which never left her, she was troubled all the way from Valladolid, with a violent distemper in her throat, so that she could not eat but with extreme pain.

They arrived at Burgos on the 26th of January, 1582; but instead of being welcomed by the archbishop, as was expected, they found him very backward in granting his licence for the monastery, which he refused to admit,

without their having first a competent revenue settled on them, and a house of their own. Difficulties still encreasing, the holy mother nevertheless lost not her confidence in our Lord, but was still encouraged by him, and relieved by friends; till at length a house being happily purchased, and the archbishop's licence after many obstacles and much patience obtained, the Blessed Sacrament was solemnly set up, and the foundation accomplished, April the 9th, 1582. The foundress of this house was a widow lady, named Catharina de Tolosa, to whose virtues the holy mother bears an ample testimony. She had already bestowed two of her daughters on the Order in the monastery of Valladolid, and two more in that of Palentia, and a fifth received the habit in this of Burgos; two also of her sons became Discalceate friars, and the mother herself at length was professed a nun at Palentia.

4. Whilst the saint was employed in the foundation of Burgos, mother Anne of Jesus, who had lately been prioress of Veas, was ordered by superiors to go and found a monastery in the city of Granada; the history of which foundation she also committed to writing, by the command of F. Gratian the provincial. This holy woman seems to have received an ample portion of the spirit of her mother St. Teresa, and like her, was divinely directed and assisted in the work of God. When the proposal was first made to her, she saw no human appearance of success; however she earnestly recommended the matter to God, and desired her sisters to do the same; upon which our Lord told her one day after her communion, that though *it was true there was at present no commodity (for this foundation) nor favour from men,* (to help it forward) yet *forasmuch as the other monasteries were erected in confidence of the divine Providence, so should*

should this too ; for he would take care of it, and would be greatly served in it. This she immediately declared to her confessor, F. John of the Cross, who thought it proper they should presently write to the provincial, that with his leave this foundation might be effected. The holy mother Teresa was also applied to, who was then about to depart for the foundation of Burgos; but she wrote back, that she wished indeed she could have come for the satisfaction of her daughter Anne of Jesus (who had expressed her desire of her coming to found this monastery in person) but that our great God had ordained otherwise; but that she was very confident that all should succeed well at Granada, and that his divine Majesty would greatly assist her.

In the mean time application was made to the archbishop of Granada for his licence, who expressed a great aversion to it, alleging that there were more nunneries already in Granada than could be maintained; and that they might be ashamed to desire to bring in any more, especially at a time of such scarcity and dearth as that was. However the nuns that were appointed by the holy mother for this foundation, being now come to Veas, it was resolved they should depart, upon notice given from the provincial, (who was negociating for them at Granada) that he had procured a house for them. When the messenger came from Granada to Veas, mother Anne of Jesus was actually meditating on those words of Christ to St. John, *it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,* and her interior was very much recollected upon it, not having at that time any thought about the foundation: and behold on a sudden she began to hear a hideous confused noise of many cries, yells and howlings, which she presently conceived to be the lamentations which the devils made upon occasion of the

orders being come for them to set out for Granada; and upon her sending to see who was at the grate, they found the messenger there, who brought the directions for their departure. In the mean while the cries and howlings encreased, and there suddenly arose such a violent storm, as if the whole earth was a going to be covered with water and hail-stones; and the mother at the same time was taken so ill, that they even thought she was going to die: insomuch that on the following day, which was Sunday, she was not able to hear mass. Yet so far was she from being discouraged with the extremity of the pains she then endured, (which she was sensible were not natural) that she became rather more courageous and resolute; as she shewed by giving orders without delay that the beasts, and all things requisite for the journey, should be made ready, and by setting off from Veas by three o'clock on the next morning.

They arrived at Granada on the 20th of January, 1586, where the gentleman, who had let them a house, that was to be their monastery, having gone from his word, and refusing now to admit them, they were received by a widow lady; who dressed up the hall of her house to serve them for a church. The archbishop, though much against his inclination, granted them his licence on the same day, having been greatly terrified two days before, by a dreadful storm of thunder and lightning (a thing never known to have happened in Granada at that time of the year) which fell upon his palace, near the very room where he lay, burnt a part of his library, and affected him so much that he fell sick with it. However though he granted the licence, he refused to bestow any alms upon these new comers, alleging that he was not able to keep those whom he had before under his charge: and thus the good nuns began

here

here to enjoy their beloved poverty, to their heart's content, wanting almost the necessaries of life, by reason of the famine which then oppressed all that country. And this continued for about seven months, during which they were also forced for want of bedding, to lie upon mats. Yet they all this while shewed a very great content, joined with an assured confidence in the care and providence of our Lord, who rewarded them with a more particular sense of his presence, and a closer communication with his divine Majesty during this time, than ever they had experienced before. This was very apparent in the proficiency they daily made; insomuch that by the lustre of their example they also greatly contributed to a wonderful change for the better, in all the other monasteries of religious women, of which there are many in Granada. Amongst other favours which our Lord did them at this time, they enjoyed one which was very extraordinary; which was the perceiving the person of Jesus Christ our Lord in the most holy sacrament of the Altar, keeping company with them, after such a manner as that they seemed visibly to perceive his corporal presence, and found wonderful effects of it in their souls, from his divine influence.

Our Lord was pleased by degrees to bring them out of those difficulties and hardships, after the first seven months; and about ten months after, he powerfully moved some of the prime gentlewomen of the city to embrace their institute; so that within a few days they gave the habit to no fewer than six of them, with whose portions, after their profession, they purchased for their monastery a house the most commodious, and best situated in all Granada, aocordingly as our Lord had foreshewn two years before, to the writer of this relation. But before these things were accomplished, our Lord had

had taken the holy mother to himself. Of whose death we shall now treat, out of the history of her life, written by F. Ribera, L. 3. chap. xv. and xvi. and by Diego de Yepez, bishop of Terresona, L. 2. Chap. xxxviii. who had both of them been sometime her confessors.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Of the holy and happy death of the Saint, and of some remarkable things that accompanied or followed it.

AFTER the holy mother had finished the foundation of Burgos, she departed to Palentia, and from thence to Medina, with a design of making the best of her way to Avila, where she was prioress, and there bestowing the holy veil on her niece Teresa of Jesus. But the Most High had otherwise appointed. For at Medina she found F. Antony of Jesus, at that time the deputy provincial, who at the request and importunity of the dutchess of Alva, had come to meet her there, on purpose to take her along with him to Alva. Thither therefore she was carried in a litter, suffering great pains all the way, and very much sickness; insomuch that when she came to Peynaranda, the next town, she felt such excessive torments, together with such an incredible decay of strength, that she quite swooned away. Nor was there any thing there to give her, for the recovering her spirits in that languishing condition, but some figs. Sister Anne * of St. Bartholomew, her individual companion,

* She was one of those who was afterward brought into France by cardinal Berulle and propagated the institute of her holy mother in that kingdom, and in the Netherlands. She died at *Antwerp* in the odour of sanctity, in 621.

nion, was exceedingly troubled, that in so great a necessity she could afford the holy mother no better help or ease: but she comforted her, saying, *do not afflict yourself, daughter*; *these figs are very good, and many poor people have not such.* The next day going to another town, they met with nothing but boiled herbs and onions, to make amends for the meanness of their dinner the day before; yet with these she stayed her appetite as well as she could, though such food as this was bad for her health. The same night, being the vigil of St. Matthew, (September 20,) she was brought to Alva. She was then so spent and sick, that when she came in, they persuaded her to go to bed, and take a little rest. Yet the next morning she got up, and both diligently visited the house above and below, and went to the church to hear mass, where likewise with great fervor of spirit, and extraordinary devotion, she received the blessed Sacrament. After which she passed some days, being sometimes better, sometimes worse, as to her distemper, till the feast of St. Michael the Archangel; on which day, after hearing mass, and communicating, (which was now her daily practice) she took to her bed, and never rose out of it any more.

Three days before her decease, she spent a whole night almost in earnest prayer and devout supplications to God, and in the morning she called for F. Antony of Jesus to hear her confession. It is believed that our Lord had then revealed to her the day of her death, for some of the nuns heard F. Antony speak to her, to entreat our Lord not to take her away so soon, but to leave her longer in this life for the good of her children; to whom the holy mother replied, that she seemed no further needful in the world: after which she began to give many wholesome advices and directions to her daughters;

ters; which, though she had never yet omitted, now, as being near her end, she uttered with great energy and power, and clearer expressions of love, than she was wont. On the vigil of St. Francis, at five in the evening, she asked for the most sacred viaticum of the body of our Lord, being by that time so weak and spent, that she could not stir herself in her bed, nor turn from one side to another, but by the help of her sisters. And whilst they were going for the blessed sacrament, joining her hands together, she said to the religious women that were about her. *I beseech you, my most dear daughters, and mistresses in our Lord, to observe the ordinances and constitutions of the rule, very exactly and entirely; and likewise I beg of you not to regard the ill example which this negligent nun hath given you; but whatever I have herein offended, I desire you would forgive me it.*

As soon as the sacred pledge of our redemption came in sight, and she beheld our Lord, whom she so passionately loved, approach within her chamber door; though before she was so exceedingly exhausted with her illness, and oppressed with her pains, that she could not move at all out of her place, she sprung up without any one's help, with such vigour as if she would have leaped out of bed; and with her face shining with an unusual beauty, darting forth rays of light, and looking after a far other manner, and much younger, than formerly it was wont; and with a venerable kind of majesty, closing her hands, she began out of the abundance of her heart to utter certain high, sweet and amorous expressions, in her colloquies with her sovereign Good, and dearest beloved, whom she now saw before her; among the rest were these: *O my Lord, and my spouse, the desired hour I have so often wished for, is now come. Now the time is come that we may see each other. It is now time, Lord,*

for

for me to depart. And happy and prosperous may the journey prove: thy will be done. The hour is come at last wherein I shall pass out of this exile, and my soul shall enjoy, in thy company, that which she hath so exceedingly longed for. She also gave our Lord infinite thanks for making her a child of his church, and giving her the grace to die in its bosom, often repeating those words, *in fine, Lord, I am a daughter of thy church.* Likewise with great humility and compunction of heart, she begged of our Lord the pardon of all her offences, hoping, as she said, for eternal salvation by the merits of Jesus Christ, humbly entreating her daughters to beg this of our Lord for her; and using often those words of the fiftieth psalm: *A sacrifice to God is a troubled spirit. A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Cast me not away from thy face, and take not thy holy spirit from me. Create a clean heart in me, O God.* But especially that half verse, *a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,* was frequently in her mouth, till her speech failed her.

At nine o'clack the same evening she desired and received with great reverence and devotion, the sacrament of extreme unction, joining with the nuns in the penitential psalms and the litany, which they recited on that occasion, and answering to the prayers. Then F. Antony of Jesus asked her, whether she would have her body, after her death, be carried to Avila or to continue at Alva. She seemed displeased with the question, and only answered: am I to have any propriety in any thing? Will they deny me here a little earth for my body? All that night she endured excessive pains, yet she omitted not the often repeating the forementioned verses of the psalm. The next day at seven in the morning she turned herself on one side, just in the pos-

ture and manner that the blessed Magdalene is commonly drawn by painters, holding a crucifix in her hand (so fast, that she let it not go, till the nuns took it away, when she was to be interred) and thus remained for fourteen hours, not so much as stirring in the least but continuing as in an extasy or trance, with an enflamed countenance, and great composedness, like one wholly taken up with internal contemplation. When she was now approaching to the last period of her life, one of the nuns viewing her more attentively, thought she observed in her certain signs of our Saviour's talking to her, and shewing her strange things; for the holy mother discovered evident marks of one wondering at the things she saw. Thus she continued till nine in the evening, when she surrendered her spirit into the hands of her Creator, in the sixty-eighth year of her age, on the fourth of October, 1582; the next day, by the reformation of the calendar which was made that year, being the fifteenth of that month, the day now appointed for her festival.) She had lived in all forty-seven years in religion, and the latter twenty of them in the rigour of the first primitive rule of the Carmelites. Her end was so quiet and calm, that they who had seen her often in prayer, would have thought her now also intent on the same heavenly exercise.

At the time of her departure, "the nun who had the charge of the infirmary, (one famed for sanctity, says Ribera, who had the following account from her own mouth) sitting at a low window of the room where Teresa lay, which looked into the monatery, heard a confused kind of noise, as of a multitude rejoicing, and soon after saw a great number of persons all in white and glittering with a wonderful splendor, who passing through the monastery, and coming into the same

room

room full of joy, so filled it with their company, that though all the nuns were there present, they could not be seen; and when they came near to the bed, where the blessed mother lay, she immediately surrendered up her soul to God. So that it seemed, they were come in that last moment of her life, to accompany her departing soul to the regions of bliss. At the time also when she expired, another of the sisters standing by saw a little dove fly out at her mouth. And at the very instant of her death another saw a great light of a crystalline kind of a colour not far from the window of the same room." To omit other remarkable things that were observed, or happened about the time of her death, which may be seen in the same historian, who had them all, from eye witnesses.

" As soon as her holy soul had left the body, her face looked most beautiful, without any wrinkles at all; whereas through age she had, whilst living, contracted many; and all her body carried with it a wonderful whiteness, without the least wrinkle, looking like a smoothed polished alabaster statue; her flesh was as pliant, and her limbs, when touched, as limber and flexible as an infant's are, and equally smooth and soft; with, I know not what kind of a beauty with them, as an evidence of her innocence and sanctity. Her whole body also sent forth a most delicious smell, which what aromatical odour to resemble it to, none could tell. The sweetness of it with time increased, and diffused itself over the whole house, extending itself also to her clothes, and blankets, and all things which she had used in her sickness; and continued with her till she was interred, and even after, was often perceived to issue from her grave.

She was buried at Alva, in the handsomest manner that town could afford, by Teresa de Layz, the foundress of that monastery; but three years after, by a decree of a provincial

provincial chapter of the order, her body was privately taken up, and removed to Avila; at which time it was found without the least blemish of corruption, and sent forth the same sweet smell as before. It was afterwards by an order of the holy see (procured by the duke of Alva) brought back to its first burying place, where it remains to this day (still incorrupt) waiting for a happy resurrection. God was pleased to illustrate this his servant, both living and dead with many miracles; divers of which being authentically proved, she was solemnly canonized by Gregory XV. at the same time with the Saints, Ignatius, Francis Xaverius, Philip Nerius, and Isidore of Madrid. Anno 1621.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Some words spoken by our Lord at sundry times to the holy mother Teresa, which were found amongst her papers after her death.

"OUR Lord said one day to me, Thinkest thou daughter, that merit consists in enjoying? No. It is only in working, in suffering, and in loving. Thou never heardest that St. Paul enjoyed celestial joys, save once; but that he suffered often. And thou seest my whole life full of sufferings; and only once hearest of my joy on mount Thabor. Think not when thou seest my mother holding me in her arms, that she enjoyed the delights without grievous torments; from the time that Simeon spoke these words, (Luke ii.) thine own soul shall a sword pierce through, my Father gave her a clear light, to see that I was to suffer. The great Saints that lived in the deserts, as they were hereto guided by God, did great penance; and besides had very great conflicts

with

with the devil, and with themselves; passing long time without spiritual consolation. Believe it daughter, that whom my Father loves best, he afflicts most, and his love is proportioned to the crosses he sends them. Wherein can I express my love to you more, than by desiring for you what I chose for myself? Behold these wounds; your sorrow will never equal these. This is the way of truth. Therefore (since you know this) you will help me to bewail the perdition, into which worldlings run; all whose desires, cares and thoughts are buried in seeking how to take a contrary course.

"When I began that day to apply myself to prayer, I felt such a violent pain in my head, that I thought it almost impossible for me to be able to attend to it. Our Lord said to me, By this thou mayest see the reward of my suffering; for since thou wantedst health to speak with me, I have spoken to thee and caressed thee. And it is certain, that for about an hour, and an half, I remained recollected; in which space he spoke to me the words I last mentioned, and all the others; neither could I at that time mind any thing else; nor knew I well where I was; and I found so great a joy, that I cannot express it; my head also was well, at which I wondered much, and I remained with extreme desire to suffer. He bade me also often call to mind the words he spoke to the apostles, (Matt. x.) that the servant ought not to be above his Lord.

"One Palm-Sunday, after I had communicated, I was seized with a great rapture, so that I could not swallow the host, and keeping it in my mouth, I really thought, when I came a little to myself, that my mouth was all full of blood, and it seemed that both my face and body were all covered therewith, and methought it was warm, as if our Lord had just then shed it, and the sweetness I then found was excessive. Our Lord said to me, Daughter,

ter, I would have my blood profit thee; and fear not lest my mercy should fail thee; I shed it with great pain, and thou enjoyest it with great delight, as thou seest, I abundantly reward the contentment, thou hast offered me this day, which he said, because it is above thirty years, that I have used to communicate on that day, if I could, and endeavoured to prepare my soul to entertain my Lord; for methought the Jews had shewed him great crúelty, after so solemn a reception, to let him go so far to eat; and I made account that he was to tarry with me, though this were too bad a lodging, by what I can call to mind. So I made such gross considerations, which our Lord, I suppose, was pleased to accept; for this is one of those visions, which I hold for most certain; and thereby I have been much more devoted toward the holy communion.

I had read in a book, that it was an imperfection to keep curious pictures; upon which I desired to part with one, which I had in my cell. And even before I read this, I thought it more becoming religious poverty to have none but of paper; so after I had read it, I kept no other. Now our Lord said to me, upon this subject, at a time when I had been thinking nothing about it, That this was no good mortification; for which was better, poverty or the love of God? Since then love was lost, whatsoever helped to excite love I was neither to remove from myself, nor forbid it to my nuns; that the book spoke of superfluous adornings and curiosities in pictures, not of the picture itself. That what the devil laboured at with the followers of Luther, was to deprive them of all means of exciting affection, and so thay went on to destruction. My faithful ones, daughter, ought now more than ever to practice the contrary to what they do.

" Being once thinking with how much greater purity one lives, when retired from business, and that when I

am

am engaged therein, I go amiss, without doubt, and commit many failings; I heard these words: It cannot be otherwise, daughter, endeavour thou always, in every thing to have a right intention, and to be disengaged, and to look at me, that what thou dost be conformable to what I did.

" Thinking what should be the reason, I had of late never almost any rapture in public; I heard these words: It is not expedient now, thou hast credit enough for that which I intend; let us have regard to the weakness of the malicious.

" Being one day in fear whether I were in the state of grace, or no. He said to me, Daughter, light is widely different from darkness; none shall perish without knowing it. He will deceive himself that presumes on spiritual favours; the true security is the testimony of a good conscience. But let no one think that he can of himself remain in light (as neither can he hinder the natural night from coming on) for this depends on my grace. The best remedy that can be had for retaining the light, it is to know that the soul of herself can do nothing, and that all comes from me; for though she be in light, that moment that I depart, night comes. This is true humility for a soul to know what she can do, and what I. Forbear not to write down the advices that I give thee, lest they be forgotten, since thou wouldst commit to writing even those given thee by men.

" On St. Sebastian's eve, the first year that I was prioress in the monastery of the Incarnation, as the choir was beginning the Salve Regina, I saw in prioress's seat (where our Lady's picture was set up) the mother of God descending with a great multitude of angels and placing herself there. Methought I then saw not the picture, but our Lady herself. She seemed to me somewhat to resemble the picture given to me by the Countess of Osorno,

Osorno, though it was but a little space, I had to compare them, being suddenly in a great extasy . . . . She continued thus all the time of the Salve; and said to me, Thou didst well to place me here, I will be present at the praises which they shall render to my Son, and will present them to him.

" One day after receiving, I thought I saw most evidently that our Lord placed himself nigh me, and began, with great kindness, to comfort me. Amongst other things, he said to me, Seest thou me here, daughter, that it is I? shew me thy hands; and methought he took them, and put them to his side, and said, Behold my wounds, thou art not without me; finish the short course of this life. By some things which he told me, I understood that after he ascended into heaven, he never descended on the earth to converse with any, save in the holy Sacrament. He told me that at his Resurrection, he visited our Lady, because she had great need; for the former sorrow had so pierced her, that she returned not presently to herself to possess that joy; and that he staid a good while with her, because it was necessary.

" One morning being in prayers I had a great rapture, and methought our Lord elevated my spirit near to his Father, and said to him, Her whom thou hast given to me I give to thee; and methonght he took me near him. This was not any thing that passed in the imagination, but done with very great certainty, and a subtilty so spiritual, as cannot be expressed. He spoke to me some words, which I now remember not; some of them were about doing me favours; and he detained me with him for some space of time.

" As soon as I had communicated on the second day of lent, at St. Joseph's in Malagon, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to me (as he is wont) in a vision represented to the imagination; and whilst I was looking on him, I saw

that

that instead of the crown of thorns on his head, in all that part (which I believe they had wounded) he had a crown of excessive splendor. I being much devoted to this mystery (the crowning of thorns) was exceedingly comforted with this sight; and I began to think what a grievous torment that must have been, which had made so many wounds, and was troubled at it. Our Lord bade me, not to grieve for these wounds, but for the many that men now gave me. I asked what I could do to remedy this; for I was resolved for to do any thing. He answered me, It was now no time for rest; but that I should hasten the erecting of these houses; for that in the souls that were in these monasteries, he took repose. That I should accept as many as they offered me, because there were divers, who for want of a place, did not serve him; and that the monasteries which I should found in small towns, should be like this; that they may merit as much by the desire of practising whatever is done in other houses; and that I should procure that all might be under the government of one superior; and that I should be careful, that for the matter of corporal subsistence, internal peace should not be lost; for he would help us, that we should never want sustenance. Especially that care should be had of the sick; for the superioress, that did not provide for, and cherish the sick, was like Job's friends; that he sent this scourge for the good of their souls, and the superioresses put their patience in danger. In fine, that I should write the foundation of these houses, &c.

"On Tuesday after the Ascension, having been a while in prayer, after I had communicated, I was afflicted, because I found myself distracted, so that I could not stay upon any one thing; and I complained to our Lord of our miserable nature. My soul began then to be enflamed, and methought I clearly perceived, that the whole sacred

Trinity was present with me; and this by an intellectual vision, in which my soul understood, by a certain kind of representation, as by a figure of the truth (that my dulness might apprehend it) how God is three and one. And also it seemed to me, that all the three Persons spoke to me, and distinctly represented themselves in my soul, telling me that from thence forward, I should see an amendment in myself in three things, with which each of these persons favoured me. 1. In charity. 2. In suffering with joy. And thirdly, in feeling this charity, with a great ardour in my soul. I also here understood those words of our Lord, by which he says, that the three Divine Persons will abide in a soul which is in the state of grace.

"Afterward rendering thanks to our Lord for so great a favour, knowing myself so unworthy thereof, I asked his Divine Majesty, with great feeling, why, since he would do me such favours, did he ever let me go out of his hand, and suffer me to become so wicked? For the day before I had been greatly afflicted for my sins, viewing them as present before my eyes. And I saw here clearly how much our Lord had done on his part, from my very infancy to draw me to himself, by the most powerful means, and how I had rendered all unprofitable. Hereby was also clearly represented to me the excessive love God shews to us, in pardoning so great an ingratitude, when we are willing to return to him; and to me more than to any one, for divers reasons. It seems to me, that those three Persons whom I saw, who are but one God, remained so imprinted in my soul, that had this representation continued it, it would have been impossible for me not to remain united and recollected with such Divine company.

"One time, a little before this, as I was going to communicate, before the host which I was to receive, was

taken

SAINTE THÉRÈSE Dᴱ JESUS.

Sᵀᴬ TERESA DE JESUS.

taken out of the ciborium, I saw a kind of a dove, which moved its wings with a noise. This troubled me so, and brought upon me such a rapture, that I had much ado to receive the blessed Sacrament. All this happened to me at St. Joseph's in Avila; where also one time I heard these words: *the time shall come that many miracles shall be wrought in this church: it shall be called the holy church.* This I heard in 1571.

"Thinking one day whether they might not be in the right, who disliked my going abroad to found monasteries; conceiving it better for me to be always employed in prayer, I heard these words: *during this life, the gain does not consist in procuring to enjoy me more, but in doing my will.*

"I was thinking (another time) that since St. Paul hath spoken of women's keeping at home (as they had lately told me, though I had heard it before) it might be God's will, that I should do so. Whereupon he said: tell them they are not to follow one only text of Scripture, but to consider the rest. Are they able, do they think, to tie my hands?

"Being one day in an hermitage of Mount-Carmel, recommending to God a brother of mine (who was in a place where he was in danger of his salvation) I said to our Lord: Lord, if I saw a brother of thine in such danger, what would I not do to help him? Our Lord answered me: O daughter, daughter, the nuns of the Incarnation are my sisters, and dost thou defer assisting them? Take courage therefore, consider it is my desire, it is not so difficult as thou imaginest; and that way by which thou thinkest those other houses will be impaired, both the one and the other will gain: make no resistance, for my power is great.

"As I was once thinking on the great penance done

by a very religious person (Catharine de Cardona), and that I could have done more (according to the desires which our Lord sometimes gave me, had not obedience to my confessors restrained me from doing it; and whether it would not be better for the time to come to disobey them in this point: our Lord said to me; by no means, daughter, thou takest a good and safe way: seest thou all her penance; I value more thy obedience.

"Being once in prayer, our Lord shewed me, by way of an intellectual vision, how a soul is, that is in a state of grace, in whose company, (by intellectual vision) I saw the most Holy Trinity, from whence is derived to that soul, a power and dominion superior to the whole earth. I was here also made to understand those words of the Canticles, *of the beloved's coming down into his garden*. There was shewn to me likewise the state of a soul in mortal sin, as being without strength, just like one tied fast, and bound, and blindfolded, so as neither to be able to see, nor hear, nor walk, and remaining in great darkness. I so exceedingly pitied these souls (in this wretched condition) that to deliver even but one such, any pains would have seemed light to me. I am of opinion, that if all this were rightly understood, in the manner I saw it (which can hardly be expressed in words) it would be impossible that any one could be willing to lose such a good, or to incur such an evil.

"Being one day about to receive the Blessed Sacrament (the second year of my being prioress in the monastery of the Incarnation,) F. John of the Cross, who was going to administer it to me, divided the host between me and another sister. I thought it was not for want of consecrated hosts that he did this, but out of a desire to mortify me; for I had told him that I was much pleased when the hosts were large, though I very well

knew

knew that our Lord was entirely present, even in the least particle. His Majesty (on this occasion) said to me: fear not, daughter, that any one can deprive thee of me. Then he represented himself to me, as at other times, by an imaginary vision (that is to say, with shape and form imprinted on the imagination) but very interior; and he gave me his right hand, saying: behold this nail, which is a token that from this day thou shalt become my spouse. Hitherto thou hast not merited it; for the time to come thou shalt regard my honour, not only as being thy Creator, thy King, and thy God, but as my true spouse; my honour is thine, and thine mine. This favour wrought such an effect in me that I could not bear it, but was as it were quite beside myself: and I entreated our Lord either to enlarge my mean capacity, or not to do me so extraordinary a favour; for it seemed certain to me that my nature could not support it. I remained all that day very much absorpt, and found afterward a great improvement, with a greater confusion and affliction, to see that I correspond in nothing to such high favours.

"When I was in the monastery of Toledo, some would have advised me not to allow burial to any who were not noble; upon which our Lord said to me: daughter, thou wilt be grossly mistaken, if thou regardest the laws of the world: fix thy eyes on me, poor and despised by the world. Shall the great ones of the world (thinkest thou) prove great in my sight? Or are ye to be valued by your extraction or by your virtues?

"One day our Lord said to me: thou always desirest troubles, yet on the other side (when they come) thou refusest them: I dispose things according to what I know thy will is, and not according to thy sensuality and weaknets. Take courage, since thou seest how I help thee.

I desire

I desire thou shouldst get this crown: in thy days thou shalt see the Order of the Virgin exceedingly propagated. This I heard of our Lord, about the middle of February, 1571.

"Being at St. Joseph's of Avila on Whitsun-eve in the Hermitage of Nazareth, reflecting on a very great favour which our Lord had done me on that day about twenty years before, there came on me an impetuosity and great fervour of spirit, which put me into an extasy. In this great recollection our Lord told me, that I should from him bid the Discalceate fathers endeavour to observe four things, which whilst they kept, their order should go on increasing; but when they failed therein, they should know they were declining from their original. The first was, that the heads should agree: the second, that though they had many convents, there should be but few friars in each one: the third, that they should converse but little with the people of the world, and this for the good of their souls: the fourth, that they should preach more by their works than by their words. This was in the year 1579; and because it is an eminent truth, I have subscribed it wtth my name."

Teresa de Jesu.

FINIS.

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FINIS.

Catharine St. Clark

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